

THE
ILAHI-NAMA
or Book of God
of Farid al-Din Attar

Translated From the Persian By
John Andrew Boyle

with a Foreword by Annemarie Schimmel

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS

**THE
ILĀHĪ-NĀMA**

Persian Heritage Series

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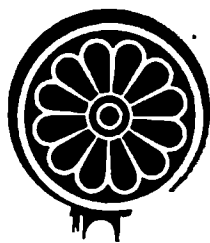
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Foreword

Had the Beloved no lovers. He would not be worthy of being loved!
Thus says 'Aṭṭār in the *Ilāhī-nāma*. Persian poetry can be compared to such a Beloved, and the reader who enjoys it in its original beauty or beneath the veil of a translation has to play the role of a lover who is constantly discovering some new aspect of his loved one. And yet one sometimes wonders what aspect of Persian literature to love and praise most. Is it the delicate charm and the opalescent beauty of the lyric, most perfectly presented in Ḥāfiz's *ghazals*? Or is it the deep-coloured majesty of the stately *qaṣida*, most eloquently penned by Khāqānī? Or should we prefer the succinct *rubā'i*, in which Persian wit and wisdom are crystallised?

Many readers would probably prefer another literary genre, that of the epic poem, a form which Persian poets developed outside the formal canon of the Arabic tradition, which otherwise supplied them with their metres and genres. Firdausī's *Shāh-nāma* inaugurates the history of Persian literature with such a rich orchestration of themes and details that it has remained unsurpassed by any of the numerous imitations in Iran herself, in Turkey or in Muslim India. But while the tradition of the heroic epic always lagged behind the standard set once and for all by Firdausī, the germs of romanticism contained in the heroic stories of the *Shāh-nāma* grew and blossomed most beautifully in Nizāmī's hands. It was left to Firdausī's compatriots on the eastern fringe of Iran to develop a new artistic form in the epic style, the mystico-didactic *mathnavī*.

Śūfism, growing out of constant meditation on the Koran and intense worship of God, who had revealed His will and word through the mediation of the Prophet, took root very early in the eastern Islamic world. The Khurāsānian school of asceticism provided the later generations of mystics with strict rules for the path of renunciation and contentment. The later Śūfī poets always repeat and elaborate the sayings of the great ascetics of the eighth and ninth centuries, beginning with Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, who was a prince from Balkh, or so legend claims. This ascetic, who, in the tradition of the Buddhist monks that once lived in his native province, went from home into homelessness, figures prominently in 'Aṭṭār's *Ilāhī-nāma*,¹ and some Buddhist ideals of renunciation may have influenced the practices of his followers. They lived their exemplary lives in perfect trust in God and absolute obedience to the God-given law; some of them wandered to Baghdad to exchange their views with the mystics in the 'Abbā-

sid capital. One of their leaders, Shaqīq al-Balkhī, appears in the *Ilāhi-nāma*³ as an expert on *tavakkul*, perfect trust in God. An ideal similar to his is exemplified in 'Aṭṭār's poem by the story of the—historically impossible—meeting of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) and Rābi'a of Basra (d. 801), the woman saint to whom 'Aṭṭār had devoted such high praise in his hagiographical work: in the *Ilāhi-nāma* Rābi'a is introduced as a vegetarian—hence no animal flees from her . . .³

With Rābi'a, who introduced the concept of pure and disinterested love into Islamic mysticism, the centre of gravity of Ṣūfism shifted to Iraq. But even after Ṣūfism had reached its first apex, after the execution of Ḥallāj, the martyr of Divine love (922), Eastern Iran remained a fertile soil for mystical thought and practice. Two of the first authors of handbooks of Ṣūfism came from that province: Kalabādhī, the author of the *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* ('The Doctrine of the Ṣūfis'), and Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, whose *Kitāb al-luma' fi'l-taṣawwuf* is a most valuable source for our knowledge of early Ṣūfī life and thought. Both of them died in the last decade of the tenth century. Slightly later Abū Sa'īd b. Abu'l-Khair of Maihana (d. 1049), to whom the first Persian mystical quatrains are (wrongly) ascribed, drew up the nucleus of rules for a 'monastic order'. His personality, mellowed after rigorous spiritual training, plays an important role in the later tradition, as also in 'Aṭṭār's work.

Sulamī (d. 1021), the author of many treatises on various aspects of Ṣūfī life and of the first systematic history of the Ṣūfis, the *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, came from Iran, and so did al-Qushairī (d. 1072), noted for his *Risāla*, the book in which he tries to explain the tenets of Ṣūfism in comparatively simple and intelligible language. (But one should not forget the almost terrifying descriptions of his mystical experiences as set down in the little *Tartīb al-sulūk*!) Qushairī and, even more outspokenly, the most famous mystical theologian of the Eastern Iranian tradition, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, (d. 1111) were the representatives of the Ash'arite school of theology, and by their sober systematisation gave moderate Ṣūfism the shape in which it was accepted by generations of pious Muslims. 'Aṭṭār tells two stories about the Imam Ghazzālī in the *Ilāhi-nāma*, once confronting him with the Saljuqid Sultan Sanjar (d. 1157), who in actual fact began to reign only six years after Ghazzālī's death, but who had become already in 'Aṭṭār's time an almost symbolical figure of the glory and power of Islam.⁴ Ghazzālī's role in the consolidation of the mystical tradition cannot be overrated, although perhaps his very greatness and towering personality as it expressed itself in his main work, the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, was the reason for the later stagnation of moderate Islam and the reappearance of some heterodox currents against which he had struggled with his pen as much as his masters, the Seljuqs and their grand vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, had done with their swords.

It says much for the open-mindedness of Islamic mysticism in the late eleventh century that at only a small distance from the dwelling places of the defenders of Ash'arite theology there lived another master of Šūfism, 'Abdallāh Anšārī, the patron saint of Herat (d. 1089). A meeting with the illiterate spiritual successor of Bāyāzīd Bisṭāmī, Abu'l-Ḥasan Khurqānī (d. 1029) (like his master a favourite figure in 'Aṭṭār's and Rūmī's poetry), had transformed 'Abdallāh into a mystic. He had to suffer for his strict adherence to the most uncompromising religious rite inside Islam, the Ḥanbalīya, but never yielded to governmental pressure. Anšārī is still loved by everyone who reads Persian for his *Munājāt*, those short orisons in rhymed prose with interspersed verses, the first devotional manual in the Persian tongue. It is today as impressive as it was nine centuries ago, when the great saint breathed his hope and fear, his sorrows and his love of God into these short sentences which usher in a new period in Islamic devotional literature. Anšārī introduced more Šūfī topics into his mother tongue by translating Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiya* into Persian. This translation was written almost at the same time as another important work, Hujvīrī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb*. Hujvīrī, a friend and disciple of most of the Eastern Iranian mystical masters, settled in the Ghaznavid capital in India, Lahore, where his tomb (lovingly called that of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh) is still venerated. Hujvīrī's detailed and well organised description of Šūfī ideas and practices is one of the most precious Persian books about mystical theories.

Only shortly afterwards the Imam Ghazzālī's younger brother, Aḥmad Ghazzālī (the hero of a story in the *Ilāhī-nāma*⁶) composed that superb little booklet on mystical love, the *Savānīh*, too fragile to be translated into any other language but that of silence, which inspired the love-intoxicated treatises of Aḥmad's disciple 'Ain al-Qudāt Hamadhānī (d. 1137) and, half a century later in central Fārs, the entrancing works of Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209).

Reviewing the spiritual history of Iran and particularly Khurāsān in the first five centuries of Islam, one is not surprised that the first great mystical poetry in Persian grew out of this soil which was so saturated with the thoughts of ascetics and mystics, not to mention the poets at the Sāmānid, Ghaznavid and Saljūqid courts. Abu'l-Majd Majdūd Sanā'ī (d. c. 1131) was the first to apply the form of the *mathnavī* (rhyming couplets) to didactic literature; not only his *Ḥadiqat al-ḥaqīqa* but also a number of smaller, highly interesting poems belong to this genre. The *Ḥadiqa* is still regarded as the first classic in the long history of Sūfī *mathnavīs*, not only in Iran proper but wherever Persian cultural influence penetrated, and that means from Istanbul to Delhi and even farther east. The Sage of Ghazna, whose *qaṣīdas* display an extremely refined technique and abundant rhetorical flourishes, and whose lyrics are sometimes amazingly light

and lilting, introduced into the *Ḥadiqa* numerous stories, proverbs and anecdotes such as were readily available in his native province; many of them can be found in the handbooks of Šūfism and the early hagiographical works. Sanā'ī's technique of loosely connecting the stories with the thread of moral application and mystical interpretation was imitated by all the following mystical writers, and his style, regarded by former critics in the West as rather insipid and boring, reveals to the persevering reader a certain austere charm and a surprising talent for matter-of-fact descriptions. Not in vain did Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī imitate Sanā'ī and often adopt his stories, verses, even his favourite idioms, into his own lyrical and didactic work.

Sanā'ī's art is still slightly 'primitive' in the best sense of the word—rather unsophisticated in spite of his rhetorical skill, and very realistic. The second master of the mystical *mathnavī*, praised along with Sanā'ī by their compatriot Maulānā Rūmī, is Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. This poet and druggist from Nishapur is counted by later Šūfī tradition, particularly in India, among the martyrs of Divine love, although nothing is known about the exact year and circumstances of his death. 'Aṭṭār's *oeuvre* is much larger than that of Sanā'ī; it is also more varied, comprising not only beautiful mystical love lyrics and a considerable number of long epics but also the famous *Tadhkirat al-auliya*, 'Biographies of the Saints'.

'Aṭṭār was a master of story-telling, as Hellmut Ritter has shown with such lucidity in his magistral book; hence one should not take at face value the information he collects about the early saints of Islam. The biographies certainly contain many anecdotes and apophthegms which can be verified from other, more sober sources, but they have a slightly romantic tinge, and it was easy for 'Aṭṭār to insert many of them into his epic poems. The *Tadhkirat al-auliya* is important as a literary source from which generations of poets and prose writers in the eastern Muslim world took their information about the religious heroes of yore. That is especially true of the traditions about Ḥallāj, to whom 'Aṭṭār, like his contemporary in Shiraz, Rūzbihān Baqlī, was spiritually attached: all later versions of the Ḥallāj story in Persian, Urdu, Sindhi, Panjabi, Pashto and Turkish can be traced back to 'Aṭṭār's account. In the *Ilāhī-nāma* the martyr-mystic who, in perfect agreement with the early ascetics, teaches his son to disallow any rest for his lower self⁶ is, as in the *Tadhkira*, again shown as 'performing his ritual ablutions with his own blood'⁷ as it behoves the true lover: a theme repeated time and again in later Muslim poetry.

Thus 'Aṭṭār's mystical epics contain an ingenious blending of inherited stories and existential mystical knowledge. The master of Nishapur is without doubt a much more sophisticated poet than Sanā'ī, and, in some respects, also than Maulānā Rūmī, whose overflowing Divine love could not be contained within the limits of 'logical' reasoning in poetry. 'Aṭṭār's

main works are beautifully constructed. The three which form the basic corpus use the cyclical tale into which hundreds of stories are inserted. But while in Rūmī's *Mathnavī* the thread of a tale is often lost, only to be taken up again after many verses or even pages, 'Aṭṭār's stories are self-contained and the general subject of a group of anecdotes is not lost sight of.

The poet's main fame rests upon the *Manṭiq al-ṭair*, 'The Birds' Conversation', the story of the thirty birds who wander under the leadership of the Hoopoe towards the end of the world in their quest for the King. They have to undergo all kinds of hardships in the seven valleys of Search, Love, Gnosis, Divine Needlessness, Unity, Bewilderment, and Poverty and Annihilation until they reach the dwelling place of the Simurgh. In the last stage of loving annihilation they realise that they, the thirty birds, *si murgh*, are themselves the *Simurgh*, the Divine bird . . . The topic had been elaborated in Iran before 'Aṭṭār, for the image of the soul bird is common in oriental lore; but it was left to him to invent this climax of the story, the most ingenious pun in Persian literature.

The *Muṣibat-nāma*, 'Book of Affliction', leads the reader, along with the hero, on a similar spiritual journey through the forty stages of created beings. The weary wayfarer asks each of them the way to God. But each creature—angel and cloud, devil and animal, the Divine Throne and the prophets alike—is himself or itself in search of God. The whole book is a chain of sighs from the created beings suffering in their unending quest for God. The epic is an exteriorisation of the mystical disciple's experiences during the forty days in lonely meditation. After each 'meeting' the Ṣūfī learns the meaning of the respective answer from his mystical guide until the last and final answer is given by the Prophet of Islam himself, who makes the seeker enter into the abysses of his own being so that he eventually finds God in the ocean of his own soul. The structure of both epics is similar: the seven valleys and the forty stages correspond to different symbolisations of mystical experience.

The third great epic of 'Aṭṭār, the *Ilāhi-nāma*, has a different structure. It is the story of a king whose six sons wish to possess six wonderful things connected with wordly power and pleasure. The king tells each of them stories relevant to their respective wishes, always ending with the information that this goal is not worth striving for. The epic thus belongs more to the ascetic tradition in which renunciation is advocated than to the later type of poems which praise love or gnosis. Its introductory part, with its praise of God, the Prophet and the four righteous caliphs, is traditional; the long anaphoras in the hymnic prayer in which the poet tries to circumscribe the unlimited greatness of God's creative power as acknowledged by all His creatures belong to the finest expressions of religious feeling in Persian poetry.⁸ 'Aṭṭār's special faculty to understand the *lisān al-ḥāl*, the 'mute eloquence' of everything created, becomes very clear from this

prayer poem. The tales are lively, as they are in all 'Aṭṭār's epics. We find anecdotes known from the Ṣūfī tradition, such as the story of the camel driver whose melodious voice excited his owner's hundred camels so much that they all died, told by Sarrāj to prove the overwhelming power of music. Beggars and lunatics, often endowed with an insight which purely rational people lack, are made the mouthpieces of social criticism, and 'Aṭṭār not infrequently puts quite irreverent speeches into their mouths; this tendency is not prominent in Sanā'i's work, and is almost completely absent from Rūmī's *Mathnavi*. Yet a number of stories reworked in Rūmī's poetry are contained in the *Ilāhi-nāma* as well; for instance the oft translated passage about the man who tried to escape the Angel of Death by asking Solomon to send him to Hindustan! The light melancholic veil that seems to cover many of 'Aṭṭār's tales is, in scenes of outbursts against God and strange behaviour, often torn asunder, and the poor, maltreated and despairing human being stands before the reader in all nakedness.

Figures from the Iranian national tradition and the Koranic prophets are introduced in the standardised imagery of lyrical poetry and tales known from the popular tradition as it had reached Iran from India and was transferred to medieval Europe are not lacking either. Majnūn and Lailā appear again: the hero of the Bedouin tales is now transformed into the ideal Ṣūfī who has identified himself so much with his beloved that he is called by her name and is afraid of blood-letting 'lest Laila be hurt'. Strangely enough the other ideal couples of Persian lyrics, Farhād and Shīrīn, or Khusrau and Shīrīn, do not occur in 'Aṭṭār's imagery; but Maḥmūd and Ayaz occupy a prominent place in his work: the haughty Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna, the mighty conqueror of north-western India, is shown in his love relationship with Ayaz, the Turkish officer—one of the strangest transformations a historical figure has undergone in Persian poetry. Another historical personality whose story is introduced in the *Ilāhi-nāma* is Mahastī (or Mahsatī), the poetess, who is connected by legend with the Saljuq sultan Sanjar.

Of course, much room is given to Ṣūfī stories: Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. 874), the lonesome and weird saint of western Iran, appears in various scenes, and it would be surprising if 'Aṭṭār had not cited his famous correspondence with Yahyā ibn Mu'ādh (d. 871), the preacher of hope and author of deeply felt prayers. Ḥusrī, though not mentioned by name, is meant in the story known from the *Tadkhirat al-auliya*, asking God whether He is satisfied with him. But this very question implies that the Ṣūfī has not yet reached real satisfaction and contentment, for then he would have accepted God's mercy and wrath with equanimity.⁹ And 'Aṭṭār embellishes one of the most touching stories from Baghdadian circles around 900, that of the love-intoxicated Abu'l-Ḥusain Nūrī, who was so carried away by the very sound of the word 'Allāh' that he rushed into a freshly

cut bed of reeds and died from the wounds inflicted upon him by their razor-sharp edges—but, our poet adds, on each reed was written with his blood ‘Allāh’!¹⁰ The slightly younger Shiblī (d. 945), who belonged to the same mystical school, is shown in his fits of madness,¹¹ a story used also by Rūmī. We see the Šūfīs in their ascetic practices, hear of their overwhelming love; animals play an important role in their lives, whether it be the pet cat of a monastery or a lowly dog who teaches a would-be Šūfī correct behaviour and freedom from hypocrisy;¹² the ant proves to Solomon how love can enhance a creature’s power to fulfil incredible tasks.¹³

‘Aṭṭār is faithful to the Ḥallājīan tradition in his treatment of Iblīs, or Satan. Iblīs is not so much the arch-enemy of man; he is rather the suffering lover who was, to use H. Ritter’s apt expression, ‘more monotheist than God himself’, since he refused to bow down before any created being; cursed by God, he accepted the curse as a robe of honour which only he could wear, and although struck by the arrow of God’s wrath he revelled in the fact that God had first to look at him before discharging the arrow at the target. This satanology is one of the central and most fascinating aspects of ‘Aṭṭār’s mystical works. Before him we know Sanā’ī’s short but extremely beautiful poem which translates Satan’s lament into immaculate Persian verses; after him Rūmī sometimes alludes to the tragic situation of Iblīs, but generally sees in him the one-eyed representative of cold rationalism.

All these figures, and many more, speak freely and frankly with the personal God, who answers them in not always favourable words. But the personal relation between man, Devil and God is still maintained, although ‘Aṭṭār knows that the Lord is found, finally, in man’s own heart.

All the figures which ‘Aṭṭār took out of his box—comparable to the puppet master in his *Ushtur-nāma*—serve to illustrate the vanity of the world, the uselessness of the dreams of the six princes. What is the use of the beautiful virgin daughter of the fairy king, or the art of sorcery, or the magic goblet which shows everything on earth? Why should man covet the water of life, or Solomon’s ring, by which demons and fairies can be manipulated, or the elixir to transmute base matter into gold? The king knows that all these wonderful things, which in their worldly form point to the greed, concupiscence and ignorance of those who strive after them, are only outward symbols of higher realities: the true elixir is the transformation of the base soul into unalloyed gold by obedience and love. The melting of the clod of earth in the sea is the symbol of the soul which, after long and painful experiences, is completely dissolved in the ocean, leaving not ‘as much as the point of a needle’¹⁴—for a needle, as carried, according to Šūfī legend, by Jesus, proves that still a last trace of wordliness resides in a corner of the soul.¹⁵

Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ‘Aṭṭār’s disciple in the art of *mathnavi*-

writing, once uses a beautiful image when speaking of the act of prayer. He compares it to touching fragrant musk through the lid of a box. Although man cannot reach, and see, the Essence of God, he still can be perfumed by a touch of His presence as experienced in the dialogue of prayer. This image may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to our meeting with a mystical poet like 'Aṭṭār. His very surname promises the reader spiritual attar of the finest quality, and each of the stories in the hexagonal box, the *Ilāhī-nāma*, contains some of this fragrance. It is certainly not by accident that the last of the king's stories speaks of *scent* as the symbol of man's transformation into spirit: the gazelle which keeps to a special diet for forty days (the forty days of meditation as evoked in the *Muṣibat-nāma*) will be so purified that the morning breeze transforms her blood into musk.¹⁶ This is the true alchemy, achieved by constant purification of one's own soul. 'Aṭṭār's stories show the way to this kind of alchemy; they contain traces of this perfume in various degrees of purity, and the more he reads the better the reader will understand the high ideals that are set before us, in lucid language and without dry theological reasoning, and the better he will be able to perfume his heart with their wisdom.

We are grateful to Professor Boyle for opening 'Aṭṭār's fragrant box to the Western public; his rendering of the *Ilāhī-nāma* will, we sincerely hope, awaken a deeper interest in 'Aṭṭār's works and encourage the translation of his other major epics also.

Cambridge, Mass.

Annemarie Schimmel

Notes

- 1 See below, pp. 58, 186–7, 235–6, 298–9 and 347.
- 2 See below, p. 139.
- 3 See below, p. 115.
- 4 See below, pp. 159 and 231.
- 5 See below, pp. 328–9.
- 6 See below, p. 288.
- 7 See below, pp. 102–3.
- 8 There are, as has been pointed out below (p. xix), three versions of the Doxology.
Professor Schimmel is referring here to the version in Ritter's text. [J.A.B.]
- 9 See below, p. 198.
- 10 See below, pp. 105–6.
- 11 See below, p. 131.
- 12 See below, pp. 86–7.
- 13 See below, pp. 50–1.
- 14 See below, p. 178.
- 15 See below, p. 276.
- 16 See below, p. 333.

Introduction

For the facts of 'Aṭṭār's life we are largely dependent upon the notoriously inaccurate and untrustworthy *tadhkiras* or anthologies and biographies of the poets, of which the most celebrated is the *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā* ('Memorial of the Poets') of Daulat-Shāh (d. 900/1494-5). According to this latter authority the poet, whose full name seems to have been Farīd al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad 'Aṭṭār, was born on the sixth Sha'bān, 513/12 November 1119, in the village (which still exists) of Kadkan, between Nishapur and Turbat-i Haidari.¹ On the date of 'Aṭṭār's birth the *tadhkiras* are in close agreement: any slight discrepancies are probably to be ascribed to the mistakes of copyists. On the other hand, his death is variously given as occurring in 589/1193, 597/1200-1, 602/1205-6, 619/1222, 627/1229-30 and 632/1234.² Of these dates all but the first and last are taken from Daulat-Shāh: they are all of them inconsistent with his statement that 'Aṭṭār perished in the sack of Nishapur by the Mongols which occurred in the spring of 618/1221.³ That the poet was a victim of the great blood-bath that followed the capture of the town in which he had passed the greater part of his life is likely enough; but we need not believe Daulat-Shāh's account of the circumstances of his death, still less a later variant according to which 'Aṭṭār, after being decapitated by a Mongol soldier, took his head in his hands and ran round for a while composing the *Bisar-nāma* ('Book of the Headless One'), one of his apocryphal works!⁴ However if we accept that he was born as early as 1119 and assume that he perished in the sack of Nishapur in 1221, he must at the time of his death have reached an age of 102; his longevity would be even greater if we accepted the later dates for his death. 'Aufī, the author of the oldest *tadhkira*, the *Lubāb al-albāb* ('Quintessence of Minds'), composed in India in the same year as the fall of Nishapur, speaks of 'Aṭṭār as one still living and places him among the poets who flourished after the time of Sultan Sanjar, who died in 552/1157;⁵ and this is consistent with the fact that in the last lines of some manuscripts of his most famous poem, the *Manṭiq al-ṭair* ('Speech of Birds'), it is stated that the work was completed at noon on Tuesday, the twentieth Dhu'l-Ḥijja, 583/20 February 1188.⁶ On the basis of this and other evidence the late Professor Sa'īd Nafīsī concluded that the poet must have been born c. 537/1142-3.⁷

His works themselves provide little information on the details of his life—indeed much less information than was formerly supposed, because two works on which such scholars as Browne, Qazvīnī and Ritter had

drawn for biographical data—the *Mazhar al-‘ajā’ib* (‘Manifestation of Wonders’) and the *Lisān al-ghaib* (‘Tongue of the Unseen’)—have been shown to be forgeries. We know—and indeed his very name proclaims the fact—that ‘Aṭṭār was by profession a druggist or apothecary. The ‘aṭṭār, literally a dealer in ‘iṭr, i.e. attar of roses, kept a shop in which he received patients, made up prescriptions and sold perfumes and spices. As Dr Fuad Rouhani remarks, the profession of ‘aṭṭār once occupied an important place in all Persian towns and is still practised at the present day in the villages.⁸ There is every reason to suppose that ‘Aṭṭār passed the whole of his active life in his shop or shops in Nishapur and the adjacent suburb of Shādyākh. He tells us himself in his *Khusrau-nāma* (‘Book of Khusrau’) how he composed two of his *mathnavīs*, the *Muṣibat-nāma* and the *Ilāhi-nāma*—poems, incidentally, consisting of some eight thousand and seven thousand lines respectively—in his drugstore (*dārū-khāna*) at a time when he was feeling the pulses and attending to the needs of five hundred patients daily.⁹

These lines in the *Khusrau-nāma* along with the prose introduction to his *Mukhtār-nāma*¹⁰ (‘Book of Selections’) throw an interesting light on the chronological sequence of the ‘religious *mathnavīs*’—so called by Ritter to distinguish them from the *Khusrau-nāma*, ‘a romantic novel of love and adventure’ concerned with Khusrau, son of the Emperor of Rūm or Byzantium, and Gul, the daughter of the King of Khūzistān.¹¹ The first to be composed was the *Asrār-nāma*, then the *Manṭiq al-ṭair*, apparently completed at the beginning of 1188, and the *Muṣibat-nāma*, and finally the *Ilāhi-nāma*. If we accept the year 1188 as the date for the completion of the *Manṭiq al-ṭair*, and if we take literally the poet’s claim that he composed the two following poems in a short space of time whilst attending to the patients in his apothecary’s shop, we shall have no difficulty in assuming that all the works of his ‘first period’ were completed by the end of the twelfth century and that his death could have occurred, as certain of the *tadhkira*-writers claim, at some time between 1193 and 1196. Alternatively if he did live on till the Mongol invasion, he would have had ample time to compose at least some of the *mathnavīs* of his ‘second period’, which Nafīsī rejects as spurious but which Ritter is inclined to accept as genuine.

It is however with the last production of his ‘first period’, the *Ilāhi-nāma*, that we are concerned here. In this, as also in the other *mathnavīs* with the exception of the *Asrār-nāma*, there is a main or framework story into which are fitted a number of subsidiary stories recounted to illustrate or reinforce a point in the argument. These tales provide abundant evidence of the poet’s profound knowledge of the sacred and profane, and indeed the oral, literature of medieval Islam. Familiarity with the Koran and the Traditions we can take for granted in a man of ‘Aṭṭār’s background; and he was obviously deeply read in the history of the pre-Islamic prophets. That, as a Persian, he was well versed in the legends of the National Epic,

the *Shāh-nāma*, occasions no surprise; but he draws freely also on such works as the Alexander Romance, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, the *Tale of Sindbad* and the Persian archetype of the *Arabian Nights*. Of folktales as such one may mention a highly interesting variant of the Tale of the Magician and his Apprentice.¹³ But the tales are only the raw material: it is the consummate art of the storyteller that excites our admiration. Some idea of 'Aṭṭār's skill as a narrator may perhaps be gained from the following translation modelled on R. A. Nicholson's masterly version of the *Mathnavi* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. It is indeed only by such interpretation, a literal translation followed by a detailed commentary, that the great Persian classics can be rendered fully accessible to a Western audience.

The translation is based upon the editions of Ritter and Rouhani,¹³ which present certain differences. The manuscripts of the poem contain three distinct versions of the Doxology and Eulogy of the Prophet, all apparently of equal authenticity. Rouhani accounts for the existence of these three versions by supposing that 'Aṭṭār composed them independently of one another with the intention of choosing one for the *Ilāhi-nāma* and using the other two in later poems in the same metre.¹⁴ I have, in the present translation, adopted the version preferred by Rouhani and prefixed to his text.¹⁵ That text contains, in the Epilogue, six stories (Nos. 8, 9, 15, 16, 17 and 18) which do not occur in most of the manuscripts (or in Ritter's text) but which bear every appearance of authenticity: these too have been incorporated in the translation.

In the annotation there will be found constant references to Hellmut Ritter's monumental work *Das Meer der Seele*, a monograph on 'Aṭṭār's *mathnavi* poems which is in effect a manual of Persian and Muslim mysticism. It was Ritter too who revised the translation in accordance with the requirements of Unesco. I am grateful to Mr Milton Rosenthal of that organisation for his good offices in securing the co-operation of a great scholar now no longer with us. I should like also to express my thanks to Professor Ehsan Yar-Shater, Director of the Iran Center in Columbia University, New York, for accepting the translation for inclusion in the Persian Heritage Series, of which he is the General Editor; to Professor James Robson, Professor Emeritus of Arabic in the University of Manchester, for answering my questions on the Traditions of the Prophet; to Professor Annemarie Schimmel, Professor of Indo-Muslim Culture in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in Harvard University, for writing a Foreword in which she traces the history of Ṣūfism from its origins down to its interpretation in the works of 'Aṭṭār; and, finally, to the officers of the Manchester University Press, in particular the Publisher, Mr J. M. N. Spencer, and the Assistant Editor, Mr J. R. Banks, for their help and guidance during the process of publication.

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John A. Boyle

Notes

- 1 See Nafīsi, pp. xix–xxi.
- 2 See *LHP*, II, 509.
- 3 See *CHI*, v, 314–15.
- 4 See Rouhani, transl. p. 24. Rouhani and Nafīsi regard the *Bīsar-nāma* as spurious, but Ritter accepts it as a genuine work belonging to ‘Aṭṭār’s ‘second period’.
- 5 See *LHP*, II, 508.
- 6 The lines are quoted by Nafīsi, pp. xlii and 129. He does not comment on the fact that this day was not a Tuesday.
- 7 Nafīsi, p. 1.
- 8 Rouhani, transl., p. 13.
- 9 For a translation of the passage see *Philologika X*, p. 151.
- 10 See *Philologika X*, pp. 154–5.
- 11 For a summary of the story see *Philologika X*, pp. 161–71.
- 12 See below, pp. 70–4.
- 13 The pagination of the two editions is indicated in the text of the translation by the abbreviations *Ri.* and *Ro.* respectively.
- 14 Rouhani, transl., pp. 34–5.
- 15 The text of the two other versions will be found at the end of Rouhani’s edition, pp. 304–22. Ritter’s edition opens with the second and longer version (pp. 308–22).

[Ro. 1]

In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

In the name of Him whose kingdom is unending, in describing whom the speech of the wise is reduced to dumbness.

His name is a joyous message to the souls of men; it appears at the head of the poets' divans.

To think of His name is to cover the palate of the soul with sugar; to mention it is to cover the sword of the tongue with jewels.

Scent without mention of His name is but colour; fame without mention of His name is downright disgrace.

He is a Lord beside whose being all that has existence is the essence of lowness.

Since His being is higher than all we know of, how then can we describe it?

With the hand of creation He flung the ball of the terrestrial globe into the crook of the polo-stick of the celestial spheres.

Since no man's intellect can rise above Him, no man can know the extent of His favours.

All negation of the world is affirmation of Him; the whole universe is proof of His being.

His attributes are His being and His being His attributes: if thou consider well He is all being.

All that exists is but the shadow of His presence; it is all the effect of His omnipotent creation.

An eloquent speaker said well of His being that the belief in God's unity springs from the rejection of all accessories.

So lofty is His rank, that everything from the Moon to the Fish¹ is to His eye as black as hair.

So great is His glory and His self-sufficiency, that all the minds and souls of men are but so many playthings to him.

Such is His majesty that were it to enter a man's soul a hundred storms would spring up in every atom.

Such is His unity that it does not leave room for a single hair; beside His unity the whole world does not weigh a single hair.

Such is His mercy that did Iblis² receive the smallest portion of it he would bear the palm from Idrīs.³

Such is His jealousy that if it fell upon the world in one moment the two worlds would clash together.

Such is the awe He inspires that if the sun had the slightest awareness of it it would be lost in an eternal shadow.

[*Ro. 2*]

Such is the sanctity of His station that from reverence none but He may approach near to it.

Such is His empire that necessarily and inevitably it can neither decrease nor increase.

Such is His strength that, did He wish so, He could in a single instant turn the earth and the nine heavens into wax.

Such is the drink that 'their Lord will give them to drink'⁴ that the soul will dip its bread in blood in hope thereof.

So vast is His realm that if the world ceased to exist its expanse would not be a single hair's breadth less.

Such is His infinity that the eye of reason and comprehension falls to the ground incapable of traversing the distance.

Such is the term He has set for all that when its time comes the world itself will be ensnared by a single hair.

Such is the vigour with which He calls His creatures to account that they can neither be silent nor speak.

Such is His seclusion that of all the men and women that have run after Him none has found the way to His presence.

Great is the heedlessness that has enchained us, otherwise we should have committed no sin.

Great is the regret that we shall feel, but regret will not profit us.

Great is the endurance that we shall need to acquit ourselves of our charge without betraying it.

The world of love has neither beginning nor end; there is no guide to it save a bleeding heart.

He is a lover who from the first step he takes immerses himself from head to foot in blood becoming like so much mud.

O Lord, I have said many foolish things; I have said much that was true and much that was not.

Though the sinner commit a hundred worlds of sins, yet one atom of Thy grace will efface them all.

We have nothing but sins to offer, no acts of devotion. What can we bring to counterbalance our sins? Only a small handful of things.

Since such is our case, O Lord, do not abandon us to ourselves.

Thou transcendest the categories of quantity, quality, and cause; Thou art beyond and outside of the world.

O Lord, Thy mercy is a universal sea; a single drop of it would suffice for us.

If Thou wert to wash the pollution of Thy sinful creatures in that sea,

The water would not be darkened for a moment but the case of a whole

world of people would be brighter.

What loss would that sea of mercy suffer if Thou gavest one drop of water to Thy creatures?

It is good that God should cry 'hā'⁵ and man should answer 'hū'⁶ and that man and God should call to one another.

Thou hast no one in the whole world; why dost thou not weep bitterly over thyself?

For if thou have a hundred friends in thy house, when thou diest, thou wilt find them all strangers.

[Ro. 3]

This grief is not given thee easily; straw will not give the strength of a mountain:

If thou wouldst have even an atom of this grief, thou must have the purity of the sea and the endurance of the mountains.

If thou die a moment before thy appointed time, in that one moment thou shalt conquer a whole world.

Forsaken and forlorn as thou art, if thou but knewest from Whose presence thou art kept at such a distance,

In regret thou wouldst brand thy side and bow thy head over thy knees in confusion.

If thou be worthy of the Road of God, extinguish the eye of desire.

When the eye of desire has been blinded, thou wilt see with God's aid through the divine eye.

There is no limit to man's bewilderment: who can find a needle in the sea?

The world is like a caravanserai with two doors: entering by one door thou passest out through the other.

Thou art sunk in heedless sleep and knowest of nothing; thou shalt die whether thou wilt or not.

Be thou beggar or king thou shalt take with thee two ells of linen and ten bricks.

The revolving heavens have exercised much cunning, and there is none that shall escape them.

Willy nilly thou must in the end be parted from all that thou hast.

Though thy realm stretch from the Fish to the Moon,⁷ thou must in the end pass through this gate.

And though thou be an Alexander, this transitory world will one day provide a winding-sheet for all thy Alexander-like glory.

My friend, the King without consulting thee has laid up a treasure in some spot.

If such be His will He will take it away or He will leave it where it is.

Why seek to know why He laid it up or why He will take it away?

This faithless world has no light, it has no feast that is not followed by mourning.

If it offer thee silver, it is stone, and if it offer thee an excuse it is a lame one.

Union without separation is no man's portion; for there is no rose without a thorn nor sugar without flies.

I know of no one who is without grief to whom I could look for comfort.

Be off with thee, resign thyself to thy heavy load; drudge away, and if thy life be asked give it.

I do not find thee brave or strong enough to ascend into heaven without first passing through the grave.

Did not Adam live in sorrow for six hundred years, shedding tears of blood on account of a grain of wheat?⁸

Since he could not take a grain of wheat without suffering a hundred misfortunes, neither mayst thou eat a morsel without the pangs of sorrow.

[*Ro.* 4]

All our gain, thine and mine, has turned to loss; woe to our birth and to existence!

O world, who is there who rejoices an account of thy tyranny? All of thy tyranny and oppression is so much wind.

Since the world does not grieve for thee, why dost thou heap dust on thy head on its account?

The world has many bridegrooms like thee; it remembers many feasts and weddings.

All my life I have striven to find a friend to whom I could confide my secrets.

I can find no true friend; alas for these faithless companions!

Since thou wert born of thy mother for the dust, why being thus lowly dost thou rear up palaces and belvederes?

Since thy eye is destined to be rubbed in the dust, why dost thou raise up thy belvederes to the skies?

Though thou hast piled up a treasure of silver and gold thou wilt not without pain drink a single draught of water.

Grieve for thyself, for no one else concerns himself about thee, nay, thou dost not concern thyself.

Thy own place will be beneath the dust, but thy pure soul shall not be sullied by it.

Is not thy essence worshipped by the angels? Hast thou not on thy head the crown of God's Vicarate?⁹

Thou art the son of God's vicar, abandon the bath-furnace; abandon thy sluggish ways and enter the rose-garden.¹⁰

A king's throne awaits thee in Egypt; why art thou, like Joseph, at the bottom of a well?

Thou hast no control over thy kingdom because the *dīus*¹¹ have taken the place of Solomon.

It is thou who art the king in the end and in the beginning, but the seer sees double.

Thou seest one as two and two as a hundred. One, two or a hundred, it is all thou.

Thou hast one heart, poor wretch, and a hundred friends: how canst thou, with one heart, accomplish a hundred tasks?

How long wilt thou concern thyself with food and clothing? How long with thy reputation with the vulgar?

In thy origin thou hast a wondrous nature, satin patched with rags.

If thou strive every moment to reach the Presence, thou shalt be honoured with the words 'Adore, and draw nigh'.¹²

With all thy foolish thoughts thou hast worn out thy original nature.

O thou that sleepest, if thou be wise, close the door to thy desires.

Great is the greed in the heart of Adam's son and great the perplexity in which he wanders around the world.

Thy heart is blinded with greed and so thou wilt remain to the brink of the grave.

Until thou die thy greed will not grow less, for only death is a balm to the wound of greed.

[Ro. 5]

Thou hast drained to the dregs the cup of this world; what wouldst thou do with the wealth of the world?

In the eyes of the traveller along the Road all the goods of this world are not worth a single grain.

Fie upon these fly-eating spiders like so many vultures engrossed in carrion!

Fie upon these ant-like talebearers, all of them like ants guideless and lost!

Fie upon the greed of that crowd of bone-eaters, all of them doglike in nature and akin to rats!

O thou who art careworn day and night, helpless in the clutches of greed,

Greed has a bridle on thy head; it is to thee as the halter to the camel.

Put thy trust in the Provider; be calm and patient.

He does not withhold his daily bread from the infidel; why should He withhold it from a wise man?

Being secure and healthy do not be slack in the morning.

If thou awake at dawn thou shalt receive what thou askest for.

The robe of honour bestowed at the Court of God is bestowed at the time of the dawn.

The gate of Paradise is opened at dawn; and it is then that His beauty is revealed to His lovers.

Wouldst thou be king at that moment ? Then go and beg at the door of Mohammed.

In praise of the Prophet

Mohammed is the exemplar to both worlds, the guide of the descendants of Adam.

He is the sun of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-seeing eye;

The torch of knowledge, the candle of prophecy, the lamp of the nation and the way of the people;

The commander-in-chief on the parade-ground of the Law; the general of the army of mysteries and morals;

The lord of the world and the glory of 'But for thee';¹³ ruler of the earth and of the celestial spheres;

The most loyal of the Prophets, the proof of the Way, the king without a seal, the sultan without a crown.

[Ro. 6]

As a king he reared up a lofty palace, but he followed the principle of 'Poverty is my pride'.¹⁴

His miracle was 'We have won a victory'¹⁵ and his banner 'help from God'.¹⁶

'As thou livest'¹⁷ was the crown on his musk-raining head and 'Have we not opened thy heart'¹⁸ the adornment of his life.

He is of a surety the crown of all sovereigns; he is in very deed the lord of the Prophets.

He, and only he, is without question the most excellent of mankind; he, and he only, is the confidant of God.

The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for him; he is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes.

He was the key of guidance to the two worlds and the lamp that dispelled the darkness thereof.

His tongue was the interpreter of kingship, his heart the scribe of divine inspiration.

Heaven and earth come under his sway; the two worlds are co-existent with his reign.

The Lord of the Worlds made him His depositary because before divine inspiration he was the most trustworthy man in the world.

Light rose up to heaven because of his beauty, and divine inspiration descended to earth because of his perfection.

Because he walked only in the way of God he was settled in 'an unfruitful valley'.¹⁹

With his mind he solved the difficulties of all mankind for his mind had seen the first design in Eternity Past.

He came in order that restless souls might quench their thirst every moment in the sea of his Law.

He was the greatest of the Prophets because though he came after he was also before.

When Adam opened his eyes for the first time, he saw from where he lay Mohammed's name inscribed on the empyrean.²⁰

He prostrated himself in the dust before his name, but since the dust became Mohammed he fell undefiled.

He was still a suckling when the flood broke over the fire-worshippers.

In every fire-temple, because of the Holy Prophet, the fire was at once utterly quenched.²¹

If fire was quenched for Abraham,²² it was quenched for the infant Prophet all over the world.

Dost thou not see how so hot a thing as fire flees before a single hair of his head?

So high were his sandals raised by his Faith that they knocked the diadem off the Chosroes'²³ head.

The ringlets of his hair toppled the crown of the Caesar and over-threw with the curls the Emperor of China.²⁴

When, in the beginning, he pulled his cloak over his head, the angel Gabriel descended and stood at his door.

He said to him: 'Verily there is a great good hidden beneath that cloak.'²⁵

The space of a single brick was absent from the Prophecy—a holy gap, indeed.

[Ro. 7]

The Prophet has said: 'That precious gap was closed by me for all eternity.'²⁶

He was indeed the culmination of the Prophets; when he came, the Prophecy was complete.

Hast thou not seen how first the army comes and then the noble King arrives.

The Prophets are like the army; they came only to announce the king.

When the sultan of the Prophecy was born, the Prophecy came to an end for he was the culmination thereof.

When his religion illuminated the world, all other rites were abolished. God is all-knowing.

What becomes of the countless stars when the bright sun shines forth?

When the Prophet called himself a brick, it was as though every brick had become a paradise.

And if that brick was moulded from the seed of Adam, it was because

one brick was the foundation of both worlds.

Since the bricks of this world have four sides, so this brick has as its four sides the Four Friends.²⁷

When the Companion of the Cave set out with him, the world was filled with light from those two peerless ones.

When he came to the house of Umm Ma'bad,²⁸ he saw a she-goat that was unmated and without milk.

The goat gave her soul to him for she saw that the sun had arisen.

When the Master touched her udders milk flowed from them like rain.

His hand was whitened with her milk and thus did Predestination produce the White Hand.²⁹

The Prophet was adult whilst he was still a suckling; Adam was plainly but a child beside him.

When, during the Flight, he entered the cave with the Friend, and there appeared the famous spider,

Which built its web across the entrance, weaving the warp and crossing it with the weft.³⁰

When the web was finished an enemy arrived and sought to make his way through that screen.

He went proudly up to the spider, saying: 'Remove the screen before these two lovers of the Faith.

Why dost thou make a screen for the lovers? Produce two tricks from behind this closed screen. Sing this song to the tune of truth.'³¹

The spider, realising the enemy's thought, thus made denial in dumb show:

'Never will a Jamshīd³² or a Farīdūn³³ fall into a spider's web.

Thou hast not a whit of sense if thou seek a Simurgh³⁴ in a fly-trap.

[*Ro. 8*]

The flesh of a fly is enough for me—how should a falcon fall into my snare?

What effect could a talisman produced from a spider's saliva have upon the one Immortal Being?

If this miracle is not as I have related, my head is attached to my waist like a spider's.

If his enemy were in the seventh earth, the seventh heaven would lay in wait for him;

To kill his enemy the sun would smite him in the eye with its sword.

Without love for him the heavens cannot revolve; without their longing for him the angels cannot breathe.

The Faith itself could have nothing without his support; no eye ever saw him knit his brow.

He was pure contentment with no feeling of anger; no eye ever saw him frown.

In the beginning the curves came from his knitted brow but they had all departed into his hair.

The curls in his hair were without number; to seek knowledge in them³⁵ is the highest task.

When his hair fell in ringlets there sprang from it the seventy-two sects.³⁶

When these curls and locks appeared on his shoulders, there appeared out of those sixty³⁷ these seventy.

Each group coveted a ringlet and made a handle out of it.

None can ever hold back his hand from such a ringlet, for it is the 'strongest handle'.

No one admitted to the Glorious Presence passed beyond self except Mohammed.

Since he passed entirely beyond self all speak for themselves there save only him.³⁸

Mohammed was the eternal sun and Jesus the dawn that announced his coming.³⁹

Since Jesus brought the glad tidings of the Chosen One, he was born in a single moment without a father.

Aye, since he brought the good news to the people, he was the evangelist and he came in great haste.⁴⁰

As he was the first to bring the good news from God, so he shall return again at the end of time.

There will be but one purpose in his return, to announce Mohammed. O most glorious return!

As his pure heart was the main body of the army, so was the centre of his soul the king.

Now at the time of a revelation, the six hundred thousand wings of Gabriel formed the flanks of this main army.

Now, a select throng of angels stood in ranks on either side thereof.

Patience was his buckler and sincerity his sword; his lance cast a shadow over the sky.

[Ro. 9]

He held in his hand the bow of 'the distance of two bow-shots';⁴¹ he fought with the arrows of 'when thou didst shoot'.⁴²

He is the Prophet of the Sword⁴³ with the crown of 'as thou livest',⁴⁴ auspiciously mounted upon Burâq.⁴⁵

What though he ruled the realm of the soul? Holy war was his trade, and hence all this.

Wishing to be slave to the Prophecy he asked God for two weeping eyes.⁴⁶

He called himself 'the son of the two slain ones',⁴⁷ from which it is clear to soul and mind.

That he sought glory of God in annihilation and was never attached even for a moment to any single thing.

Because he placed no hope in existence he was sealed with the seal of 'his eye turned not aside'.⁴⁸

And when his soul was seething with the turmoil of yearning, sometimes he would say:

'Would that God the Wise, the Just had never brought Mohammed into existence!'⁴⁹

This he said because the Lord of the World had called him his ever-shining light.

Though the wax produces a bright light, yet it is always in pain and suffering without the honey.

At first the wax was absorbed in the honey; and because of their oneness it had no thought of this and that.

Afterwards, when it was taken away and removed from union with the honey,

It whispered these words: 'What have I in common with candles? I have lived in oneness; what have I in common with the crowd?

If I had not become a candle I should still be together with the honey.

When I became a candle and was parted from my beloved, God called me a light; but how long shall I burn?

If I had remained with the honey I should have been saved from all this burning.'

Because he was naked he sat on the sand; because he was hungry he tied a stone to his belly.⁵⁰

These are proofs of his perfect poverty: the poverty of God is a very exalted stage.⁵¹

Had he had the slightest desire, how should he have been the leader of the poor?

He remained poor because it is ill-mannered to pick up the largesse scattered at one's own wedding.

He had no wish for goods and chattels; one day he ate his fill and the next he went hungry.

What though this nine-chambered palace⁵² was raised up for him out of nothing, out of smoke?⁵³

Often a month would pass without any one's seeing smoke rise from his nine chambers.⁵⁴

If those nine chambers were created out of smoke, it was because no smoke was to rise from these.

When he returned, with a hundred honours, from his ascension,⁵⁵ his face never grew dark.

His stars⁵⁶ relate that when he sat like the moon in their company,

[Ro. 10]

He eclipsed that company with a light such as that with which the sun eclipses a candle.⁵⁷

All his Companions, when they were near him, were lost to self because of the awe he inspired.

Faced by the sea, how shall a drop of water retain its separate self?

It was because of the awe he inspired that there was disagreement about those on whom the light shone.

As to whether the eyebrows of that leader of the two worlds were joined or not.

The people of the two worlds could not see his eyebrows, for it is not not easy to see at a distance of two bows.⁵⁸

The whole world was spread out like a tablecloth before his eyes,

So that the secrets of the universe were revealed to him and he had knowledge of both worlds.

When the divine mysteries were unveiled to him, because of what he had seen he said: 'Thou art what thou wilt.'⁵⁹

Seeing with the eye that had looked in the mysteries he could look through the wall at Paradise and Hell.

Paradise and Hell concealed themselves behind him; thou knowest then who were the beggars behind his wall.

They preferred their place behind the wall to the Hereafter because thus they could see the sun of his face.

They both of them strayed from the Hereafter because of their longing to gaze on such a sight.

Having met those that had lately been with God he hurried forwards to be received by God Himself.⁶⁰

He went bareheaded before God, for one can approach God [only] when bareheaded.⁶¹

Blackhearted Satan does not dare to appear in his garb.⁶²

His food was barley bread, yet he clove the breast of the loaf-like disc of the moon as though it were a grain of wheat.⁶³

The food of his soul came from the table of poverty, but though poverty was his so was glory.⁶⁴

When the light of his poverty shone forth Solomon would come to be his slave.

Now he would sweep the dust of the road out of his house; now he would take his rest in the dust of the road.

Now he would run to and fro with 'Ā'isha; now he would fetch bricks and mud to build a mosque.

Now he would stitch at sandals; now he would tell secrets to children.⁶⁵

Now he would take part in a funeral procession; now he would visit the sick.

Now he would collect fodder for the camels; now he would carry a hand-mill in his turban.

Now he would act as cupbearer at a banquet, standing in the place of 'the lord of the people'.⁶⁶

Now in the kindness of his heart he would pretend to be a camel to amuse those two intelligent children.⁶⁷

[Ro. 11]

When that Holy Prophet came into the world, babe though he was he at once prostrated himself in worship.

He came forth from the womb with his umbilical cord already severed; his mother bore him already circumcised.⁶⁸

If he stood among a crowd of men he was taller by a head than the tallest of them.⁶⁹

No one ever saw his excrement:⁷⁰ the earth would swallow it up like ambergris.⁷¹

He could see both in front and behind equally well. Never did a fly settle on his person.

Since his shadow fell on the celestial spheres, how then could he cast a shadow on the ground?

Since his shadow covered the empyrean how then could it fall on the earth?⁷²

One night he resolved to ascend into heaven and to rise above the two worlds.⁷³

Burāq, who was pining for his master, had long been tethered to the tree called Tūba.⁷⁴

Sniffing the scent of Mohammed he brayed loudly, broke his tether and galloped towards him.

Then Gabriel appeared and said: 'Why art thou still on earth, O Pure One? Ascend into the heavens.

Thou art by right the lord of the empyrean; rise from the earth to its loftiest pinnacle.

Thou art the symbol of mercy in both worlds; thou art the host that dispenses it to both worlds.⁷⁵

Thou hast regaled the earth for a while, and now it is the turn of the heavens.

Make of thy poverty an elixir for the peoples of the earth; make of the dust of thy feet a collyrium for the angels.'

When the Holy Prophet set out upon Burāq he rose with the speed of lightning to the seventh heaven.

He rose, thus mounted, up to the throne of God, for he was lord of Burāq and of the pulpit.

On his right stood the supporters of God's throne and on his left the guardians of the earth.

Beneath the hooves of Burāq the heavens were as the earth, while Gabriel was as the servant at his door.

He unfurled his banner over the empyrean and took his stand on the 'seat of truth'.⁷⁶

There came a cry from the denizens of the heavens: 'The Lord of the World has come to the trysting-place.

The orphan who followed Abū Ṭālib is now a precious pearl sought by all seekers.'⁷⁷

A hundred thousand lofty souls were brought from the Divine Presence to welcome him.

Jesus passed in front of him as Zulaikhā had passed in front of Joseph, and he restored him from old age to youth as Joseph had done to Zulaikhā.⁷⁸

From the breath of his spirit Jesus the Pure received, as it were, new life in heaven.

Solomon came and offered him a crown; beggar-like he set a basket in front of him.

Moses, having paid his respects to him, departed in hopes of being received amongst his people.

Abraham brought his all to sacrifice before him, his son.⁷⁹

[Ro. 12]

Noah came from his Ark to meet him and was proud to find him on Mount Jūdī.⁸⁰

Adam came and made merry; he questioned Mohammed about the secret of man's nature.

Riḍwān⁸¹ brought in wine and asked him about his long journey.

Because he had grown thirsty of that journey he brought him a draught from Salsabīl;⁸²

And because he was heated with the ardour of his love he tempered that draught with camphor;

And because he was affected with the coldness of certainty he tempered it likewise with ginger.⁸³

And when his humours were restored to equilibrium he offered him honey tempered with milk.⁸⁴

And because in *Ṭā Hā*⁸⁵ he had been designated as the Pure One he received 'a drink of pure beverage'.⁸⁶

His drink was 'choice sealed wine',⁸⁷ whereof the seal was known to none but God.

The sky, the master of the sun, had led Burāq that night.

The golden sun was the pommel of the Prophet's saddle; the new moon kissed his feet like a stirrup.

The halo of the moon provided Burāq with barley from Gemini and straw from the Milky Way.⁸⁸

As the Prophet galloped along the road that night Burāq cast one of his shoes upon the sky.

That shoe became the new moon; the sky fixed it in its ear and formed an archway for him.

Arcturus offered him a lance⁸⁹ having cleared Medusa's Head from the way.

The houris stood all along the road from the Fish to the Moon.

In that turquoise garden, despite the darkness of the night, thousands of eyes were brightened with the splendour of his face.

For gladness the empyrean reared up a pavilion for him and placed a throne in it.

Taking its support from his two tresses⁹⁰ Ṭūba⁹¹ cast its shadow over Paradise.

When the Dragon's Tail⁹² reared up⁹³ against him, it was docked like Scorpio's from fear of him.⁹⁴

The heavens made Virgo⁹⁵ into a broom, then bent to sweep the way for him.

Cancer, recognising his glory, flung himself headlong into the water.

When Gemini⁹⁶ girded his loins as his bodyguard, Libra came and balanced its beam.

Sagittarius unstrung his bow: it had two houses and offered them both to his soul.

Aries and Capricorn were roasted for him and a table laid that stretched from the Moon to the Ox-Fish.⁹⁷

Leo became like a lion painted on his carpet and Aquarius like a wheel rolling after him.⁹⁸

When the Two Sisters⁹⁹ beheld his face, they threw back their veils in their longing for him.

The Two Vultures¹⁰⁰ appeared without their attributes in order that there might be no evil omen.

[Ro. 13]

Although the Seven Thrones¹⁰¹ were revolving around the Pole like the seven men.¹⁰²

When they beheld his manliness and life, they became dead women carried upon a bier.¹⁰³

Each angel came with his censer to burn aloes-wood as a token of sincere love.

Ridwān opened the eight gates¹⁰⁴ of Paradise and washed the nine approaches¹⁰⁵ with the water of Kauthar.¹⁰⁶

The guardian of Paradise rejoiced the world by displaying a great company of houris.

Awed with his splendour the empyrean ceased to move; it stood as still as the eighth heaven.

When the Preserved Table¹⁰⁷ saw the value of the dust under his feet, he made of it clay tablets such as the Shiites use when prostrating themselves in worship.¹⁰⁸

When the world of light had been filled with his beauty, the 'Frequented

Temple'¹⁰⁹ fell in ruins out of love for him.

The heavens scattered largesse in very deed, for they offered all they possessed.

Each sphere brought a hundred purses, lawful gifts, for they came from the Sidra tree.¹¹⁰

The firmament asked God for a present to offer him, and God adorned it every night with the stars.

And because such was the present offered him the faithful Companions of the Prophets were said to be 'like the stars'.¹¹¹

From the splendid sun that shone that night each star received a new light.

He gave Saturn the charge of the crops of the heavens; by decree he conferred upon Jupiter a cadí's gown.

He honoured Mars with the office of executioner; with his hair he cast a shadow over the Sun.

On Venus he bestowed sweetness of language while to Mercury he gave supremacy in wisdom.

To the Moon he appeared like Joseph and caused her to cut both hand and orange.¹¹²

The Sun of the Law rose up with such speed that even Gabriel with his six hundred thousand wings.

Could not catch up with him or discover where he was.

When he had passed through the ranks of the angels he saw another world like one 'level plain';

A world in which there were none of the marks of a world, no sign of 'level plain'¹¹³ or of 'cushions';¹¹⁴

A world devoid of nearness and farness, a 'light upon light'¹¹⁵ because of his light.¹¹⁶

He found the earth of that world to be patience and all its running water knowledge.

His glory gave grandeur to the heavens, his beauty illuminated the sun.

So did his soul perspire with longing for God that he rent his robe into a hundred pieces.

Aye, since the sky was his robe he rent it all, for that night he could do nothing else.

[Ro. 14]

The proof of this is the Milky Way, which is made up of small pieces of the nine curtains.¹¹⁷

Those nine curtains were rent to pieces during his ascension, because he was the intimate of God for ever.

There came a voice from God, saying: 'Master, at last thou hast come to Our door. What is thy wish?

Thy heart is with all sinners, for thou art right when thou sayst: "Walk

at the pace of the weakest among you".¹¹⁸

The Prophet said: 'Lord, Thou knowest how I feel, Thou hast no need to question me.

Thy favours are so continuous that I cannot count them; my tongue is tied.

Nothing is left of my being; all is now sun, the shadow is gone.'

When the Lord of the Two Worlds felt weak, God strengthened his arm with the 'two bows'.¹¹⁹

Mohammed was the mightiest man in the world; therefore it is that he holds those bows.

Better bows the black-eyed houris will never see that the 'two bows'.

At that moment when he was immersed in knowledge he had, as it were, two qualities of the arrow:

One of them to stand straight upright and the other to fly through the air like an arrow.

And having in his being these two attributes of the arrow, the 'two bows' are the symbol of his two stations.

When, in the first place, he set out towards God, he sped upwards like an arrow from the bow.

And when, in the end, he was sent back to mankind, he was discharged like an arrow from the bow.

These two flights were from two bows, hence the parable of the 'two bows'.

And since Sagittarius is always in two houses, therefore there are always two parts to that bow.

One thou knowest as that of Aḥad,¹²⁰ and the other is that of the eternal Aḥmad.¹²¹

The attraction of God shot forth like an arrow and split the *mīm*¹²² of Aḥmad in two like a hair.

The *mīm* of Aḥmad fell out and it became Aḥad; and all duality became unity.¹²³

In that night the Peacock of the Angels¹²⁴ was utterly effaced by the raven of his hair.

See in his two tresses two ravens; see in the almonds of his eyes how they 'turned not aside'.¹²⁵

The 'two bows' are a symbol of his eyebrows; the ends of those bows are his two tresses.

Since his tresses were all light they gave rise to two rainbows.

I know of no one in the world who could wield the 'two bows'.

When the ravens of his tresses grow restless, the Peacock of the Heavens is a fitting quarry for them.

[*Ro.* 15]

Hurrah for the bow, the thumb and the bow-end! Hurrah for 'is not'¹²⁶

and 'what He revealed'¹²⁷ and 'turned not aside'!¹²⁸

It is because of its envy of the Prophet's 'two bows' that the sky has two arcs around its axis.

God, Who to glorify Adam revealed to him the names of all things,⁹¹²

Revealed to Mohammed the things themselves¹³⁰ and therefore made him illiterate and poor.

Going beyond names to the nameless state of things he had no need to read and was therefore illiterate.

Since he went disembodied along the road of God he became from disembodiment absolutely poor.

Impelled by disembodiment and poverty he received from the Archetype of the Book¹³¹ the surname of 'the Illiterate'.¹³²

God first of all ordered that there should be fifty prayers a day but for his sake He reduced the number to five.¹³³

If that night he passed beyond the whole and the part it was because purging himself of self he became wholly absorbed in God.

O heart, see to the eternal good of thy soul; fasten thyself to this saddle-bow.

Gird thy lions before him as his servant so that thou mayst become a great lord.

What more can I say, O Prophet of God? Impotent wretch that I am, I know no more.

Great is Gabriel and yet he is but thy messenger; he does nothing but run thy errands.

When Michael saw that thou wert king he became a purveyor to thy army.

With sword in hand and loins girt 'Izrā'il¹³⁴ stands ever ready to act as thy executioner.

The faithful Isrāfīl¹³⁵ stands sentry in thy doorway.

Of the angels that guard thy threshold two are the 'illustrious recorders'.¹³⁶

Father Adam is the scribe at thy court; many names has he written down describing thy nature.

Idris, recognising thee in the stars, established thy worship in Paradise.¹³⁷

Since thy sovereignty embraces the whole world Noah has chosen to be thy pilot.

Šālīḥ¹³⁸ gladly became thy camel-driver and entertained thee with camel's milk.

When Abraham became thy mason¹³⁹ the whole of the Ka'ba became thy sanctuary.

When Ishmael heard of thy faith, a son was sacrificed with uncut throat.

Jacob was filled with grief in his longing for thee; it was in search of thee

that he withdrew into solitude.

Joseph escaped from prison and the well and with a hundred kinds of beauty sought a share of thine.

[Ro. 16]

The noble Khidr ¹⁴⁰ waters the end of thy street from his fountain.

Elijah received a renewal of life from thee and so had chosen to guard thy life till Judgment Day.

Jonah became thy friend upon the way and he entered the sea in order to find thee again.

David felt a great longing for thy soul and he gave a hundred lives in his laments for thy love.

Job, seeing thee as the physician of love, dragged his body away from the worms towards his cell.

Solomon, seeing thee as the lord of the world, girded himself like his ring.

John¹⁴¹ offered his head to thy crown, and Aaron stood at thy door as a herald.

Moses was but thy guide upon the road and Jesus thy Indian slave Mubārak.¹⁴²

Since thou hast such a companion as 'Say: "He is God"',¹⁴³ draw a line through all else than God.

Though the wife of Abū Lahab, filled with annoyance, scattered thorns in thy path,¹⁴⁴

Thou art a hidden rose: walk cheerfully on, for no rose will bloom without a thorn in its foot.

Some good chance befalls thee every instant, and as a protection against the evil eye it is sufficient for thee to repeat 'Say: "I take refuge in God"',¹⁴⁵

The seven celestial spheres have a lamp on every finger, the stars.

They call to thee in pain and anguish, but who would seek the sun with a lamp?

Thou art the sultan of earth and heaven, the lamp of this world and the next.

The sky is always rolling like a ball in order to catch some glimpse of thy majesty.

In that gathering in which there is scope for thy majesty the highest heaven is but a shoe-rank,

Although thy majesty is beyond computation, being higher than the nine heavens and hidden behind nine hundred screens,

Yet for envy of it this beautiful vault turns over and over, day and night.

A single beam of thy majesty shone on the heavens and from that one beam the sun and moon received their light.

What more can I say? For thy attributes are such that they would fill a hundred worlds beyond the ken of mind or soul.

Supposing the whole world were full of poppy seeds and there were a panegyrist inside each one of them,

I do not know whether thou wouldst be adequately praised or, if thou wert, whether thou wouldst accept it.

Thou knowest that none of the poets have sung such praise save only I.

This work is a young bride that seeks the protection of thy generosity and wishes for no jewels and adornment but thy acceptance.

[*Ro. 17*]

If thou accept me my task is done, if not there is an end to my grief-stricken life.

If thou accept these words of mine, I shall with my art rebuild the ancient heavens.

Although thy presence is a mighty sea, yet this drop too is a precious pearl.

For though the ocean has a vast mass of water, yet it also cherishes every individual drop.

Dost thou not see how the boundless sea lovingly assigns its place to every single drop?

What more can I say, O Prophet of God? I have said what I am capable of saying.

Thou art generosity itself and thou knowest all. If thou wouldst bestow a hundred favours on me, it is in thy power.

Story

There was a prostitute in Mecca whose entire stock in trade was vice and depravity.

Whenever someone had a mind to debauchery that woman would offer herself as his partner.

She had a melodious voice, was graceful in her movements and pleasant of speech; and there was never a moment when she was not singing.

When the Prophet went to Medina and war and hate were changed into love,

The cause of Islam prospered and the Faith was strengthened by the overthrow of unbelief.

When none of the wicked was left in Mecca and they had been scattered on every side,

That woman went off to Medina in a state of great poverty; sore of heart she approached the Prophet.

The Prophet said: "Tell me, how is it that thou hast come? As a fugitive or to ply thy trade?"

Hast thou come hither for the sake of the Faith or hast thou come to sell thy wares?’

Said the woman to the Lord of the World: ‘I have made the journey neither for this reason nor for that.

I have come hither because I heard tell of thy generosity.

Wretched and forsaken as I am, I have travelled this long way in the hopes of thy giving me a present.’

Said the Prophet: ‘Mecca is full of young men: it would be more fitting for thee to ask them.’

Said the woman: ‘Because of thy wars and battles and the fear of thy dagger and arrows,

The fame of thy strength and might, the greatness of thy miracles and thy renown,

The horsemen of Arabia have lost their strength—how then should anyone go to the singing-girls?’

The Prophet was pleased with her words and gave her his only cloak.

[*Ro. 18*]

And he said to his Companions: ‘Let all of you who are my friends give her something from what you have.’

The Companions gave her a hundred different kinds of presents, and she became a person of wealth.

A lost woman, O Prophet of God, sunk in polytheism and depravity,

Because she once uttered a word or two in thy praise, became by thy generosity the owner of great riches.

Thou didst not cause her to despair; thou didst not deprive her of thy favour.

Thou knowest that in his praising of thee ‘Aṭṭār turned many times upon himself like a compass.

If he received as his reward the dust of thy street, he received in every mote of it a new sun.

He has praised with his soul the dust of thy street; admit him to it if thou canst.

He cannot do without thee, do not disappoint him; take the hand of one who has fallen.

Since the woman had a cloak from thee, I too should have a present.

Thou art king in both worlds and canst bestow divine robes of honour.

Honour his body with such a robe of which even his shirt will not be aware.

Adorn his heart with a belief in God’s oneness such as cannot enter a specific body.

All that I seek is disembodiment, but why do I speak seeing that thou knowest and art able?

I am the slave of my heart because my heart is always thy faithful slave.

Upon thy road I have not even the power to say 'Intercede for this beggar.'

If some poor wretch sets out without subsistence on the Pilgrimage,
And if some man of rank sees him in his distress, how shall he refuse him water?

Since thou art a man of rank in both worlds, it is fitting that thou shouldst let a few drops of water fall on my lips.

My breast is filled with torment in this burning heat, and thou wilt refresh my heart with a draught of water.

And if I be not worthy of thy water, at least do not let me be carried off by the flood. And God knows best.

[*Ri. 21*]

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Abū Bakr¹⁴⁶

He was the leader of the men of the Faith, the great Ṣiddīq,¹⁴⁷ the just Imam of all who shall appear on the Day of Judgment.

He was the greatest of those guided by God's mercy, for he was the first to do good works in the Faith.

[*Ro. 19*]

On the night of solitude he was the friend and companion of the cave;¹⁴⁸ his largesse on the first day was forty thousand [dirhems].¹⁴⁹

He that sets a good example will always be rewarded.

[*Ri. 22*]

And since Abū Bakr set this example, he will receive the rewards due to all the world also.

His faith in the Purpose of Creation¹⁵⁰ outweighed the faith of all others because of its precedence.¹⁵¹

He had a toothache for ten years but never told the Prophet.

When the Prophet learned of it in a revelation from God, he said to him: 'O man of truth,

Why didst thou never tell me?' He answered: 'It is not good to complain of God.'¹⁵²

When a man keeps a secret of his body so well, who but God can penetrate the secrets of his soul?

He had put a stone in his mouth in order that his tongue might not scatter jewels.

I have heard of jewels hidden in stones but never saw a stone hidden amongst jewels.

So deeply was his soul absorbed in God that rarely would a word pass his lips.

Since his soul was occupied with meditation he has left on record only eighteen traditions.

But though there were eighteen thousand worlds those eighteen traditions would be a fitting monument to him.

His conversation was concerned only with the creation of the world; and the proofs he adduced were not to be contraverted.

See what wisdom and insight was his! He knew of the child while it was yet unborn.

When he prayed for a poor blind man, God granted his prayer and restored the man's sight.

Never did he speak to excess; he would open his mouth only to say 'Do not choose me.'¹⁵³

When his time came to die they brought him to the shrine of Mohammed.¹⁵⁴

Because of the loyalty of that key to the world of mysteries, the door opened and the bolt slipped out of the lock.

No one had laid his hand on the lock and yet the bolt leapt out of it to welcome him.

Even iron believed of his loyalty. Why then were the hearts of his enemies as hard as iron?

[*Ri. 23*]

A lock was moved by his loyalty. Why were the hearts of his enemies not unlocked?

When his companions entered the shrine they found a grave already dug.

They laid him in it and withdrew, convinced of his loyalty to the One God.

[*Ro. 20*]

Of such a one that stands by thee though bitten by a snake it can indeed be said that he is a 'friend of the Cave'.¹⁵⁵

A snake must be venomous indeed to attack such a friend.

The Prophet called Abū Bakr and 'Umar his eye and his ear.¹⁵⁶

And since he called them thus all who have not these qualities are blind and deaf.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar¹⁵⁷

He was the Imam of Imams, the candle of the two worlds, the Commander of the Faithful, the great Fārūq.¹⁵⁸

God spoke through his tongue:¹⁵⁹ therefore it is that Fārūq comes from Furqān.¹⁶⁰

When his heart saw God in its sanctuary, it was united with the very essence of justice.

And when his heart and justice came together, both worlds were inundated by his justice.

When he closed the door of tyranny for ever, with his justice he opened a hundred doors to the Persians.

By him the cause of the Arabs was strengthened and the Persians converted to the Faith.¹⁶¹

He that does not believe in this cause and effect is a foe of both the Persians and the Arabs.

Because of his firmness iron turned into wax: he undid the lock of Byzantium.¹⁶²

Two shirts would have been so harmful to his body that he had but one.

When he embraced the Faith he had one shirt, and when he took it off it was his winding-sheet.

So often did he patch it that it came to weigh seventeen maunds.¹⁶³

And yet for his seventeen patches¹⁶⁴ he rent to pieces eighteen thousand worlds.

[*Ri. 24*]

And having conquered eighteen thousand worlds, why did he dress in rags weighing seventeen maunds?

Since his entire property was one shirt, all his joy was in his belief.

Because of his valour and might Nakir and Munkir¹⁶⁵ did not dare to approach his grave

When the noble Fārūq was the *muhtasib*,¹⁶⁶ no evildoer would prowl about.

As *muhtasib* he explained what was lawful and was famed for forbidding what was wrong.

The Prophet called him his eye.¹⁶⁷ How great an honour! He also called him the lamp of Paradise.¹⁶⁸ How high a title!

[*Ro. 21*]

He is the lamp that lights the East and the West but whose oil comes from neither the East nor the West.

Since he is the eye and the lamp of God's Court, how wilt thou journey thither without eye or lamp?

If thou have neither eye nor lamp, thou canst not tell a garden from a furnace.

Thou must always have thy eyes and a lamp too in front of thee.

For if thou travel without eyes or lamp thou wilt not know the road from the pit not the pit from the road.

If thou set out with either, thou wilt in the end in thy blindness fall into a pit.

When Mohammed called 'Umar his eye, his tongue acquired the speech of the Lord of the World.

If thou be not blind, take heed; give ear to such an eye and such a tongue.

He that has not this light in his brain would find no lamp even in Paradise.

The radiant sun in the lamp of the heavens; the great Fārūq is the lamp of Paradise.

When the trumpet is blown on Judgment Day, the heavenly lamp will be extinguished.

But this other lamp which illuminates Paradise will shine brighter every day and night.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Uthmān¹⁶⁹

The foundation of modesty on which the Faith is based was laid by the Commander of the Faithful ‘Uthmān.¹⁷⁰

The heavens are but vapour rising from the sea of his knowledge, the earth but dust from the mountain of his meekness.

He was a whole world of wisdom, a personified soul, possessed of two marrows in the two lights of the Prophet.¹⁷¹

Nay, what do I say? He had three marrows, two from those two lights and one from the Koran.¹⁷² What glory was his!

In a sanctuary lit with three such lights he was clearly seen even by his enemies unless they were blind.

If the sun have a stock of radiance it is only with the aid of Him of the Two Lights.

None but he has ever achieved such perfection, to be united to two daughters of the Prophet.

Since the Koran was revealed in pain, it is the proof that a man is worthy of it,

That he leaves this world in pain; and so it was with that Sun of the Two Lights.¹⁷³

Since he received the favour of possessing the two eyes and lamps of the Prophet

And was, as the Possessor of the Two Lights, of the Prophet’s family, how could anyone doubt his loyalty to the Faith?

If a man receives two such lights from heaven, the sun and the moon are his servants.

[Ro. 22]

If thou breathe the breath of hatred against such a man, thou be-smirchest the moon and the sun.

He that broke his staff across his knees was struck with a cancer in his own knees.¹⁷⁴

His staff was in fact, like that of Moses,¹⁷⁵ the foe of his foes.

And if he had an enemy in the world he was in effect another Pharaoh.

He said: 'Since I laid my hand in the Prophet's hand to pledge allegiance to him,

Out of respect for his hand I have never touched anything unclean.'

He that showed such respect to the Prophet's hands subdued the soul of all true believers.

[*Ri. 26*]

His heart was a great sea of knowledge, his body a vast mountain of meekness.

He had in truth collected the Koran in his heart; all the mysteries of the universe were in his grasp.

Because he collected the Koran he was always composed; because of his application to the Furqān he could discriminate between the noble and the base.¹⁷⁶

Being the Imam of noble and base why should he be wanting in the judgment of his likes?

All his life he never supped nor slept any night without having first recited the whole of the Koran.

When there was a rising against him his slaves at once armed themselves for battle.

He said to them: 'Every slave that shall today lay down his arms shall be free and victorious.'¹⁷⁷

As he was always reading the Koran, it was his constant practice to collect the *ḡāmi'*.¹⁷⁸

In the end he was martyred whilst reading it; and it was the Koran that caught his blood.

Loving the Koran more than all the world that Candle of Lovers was in the end absorbed in what he loved.

Though Fārūq was the Candle of Paradise, yet like a candle he lost his head on the road to his Beloved.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī¹⁷⁹

Were there an Imam from East to West it would be the Commander of the Faithful Ḥaidar.¹⁸⁰

With the thrust of his lance he conquered this present world; the tale of the three loaves passed beyond the other world.¹⁸¹

He was initiated in the mysteries of giving; and seventeen verses of the Koran are devoted to the three loaves.

Those three round loaves were like the discs of the moon and sun, and therefore like the moon and the sun he entertains the two worlds at his table for all eternity.

If thou be continually showered with arrows it is sufficient to know that

'the love of 'Alī is a shield'.¹⁸³

[Ro. 23]

The Prophet said to him: 'O light of my eyes, we were both created from one light.'¹⁸³

Since 'Alī is of one light with the Prophet they are as one person with no trace of duality.

As gate to the city of knowledge he is with good reason the gatekeeper of Paradise.¹⁸⁴

[Ri. 27]

So absolutely was he given over to poverty that he was irrevocably divorced from gold and silver.

Though silver and gold were highly valued, they were as a calf to the people of 'Alī.¹⁸⁵

How should a calf ever have dared to match itself against a lion such as he?

It is related that he had a coat of armour of which the front and the back were simply a window.

If his back was as exposed as his face it was because he depended upon the Prophet as his armour.

He said once: 'Though I should be slain, none shall see my back on the battle-field.'

If thou become the dust beneath his feet, this is an excellent place of refuge, for he is both the 'Father of the Handsome One'¹⁸⁶ and the 'Father of Dust'.¹⁸⁷

He said: 'If by God's command I were set up in a pulpit and given the office of judge,

I should always judge between the peoples of the world in accordance with the Four Books.'¹⁸⁸

Whatever he said he uttered out of the sea of certainty. One day he opened his mouth and said:

"If the covering were uncovered"¹⁸⁹ assisted me, otherwise how could I worship Him without seeing Him?

Hurrah for that eye, that knowledge and those words! Hurrah for the Sun of the Law, that swelling sea!

The breath of the Lion of God penetrated to China; because of his knowledge the musk-deer produced the musk in its navel.

Therefore it is that they say: 'If thou art just and pious, go from Yath-rib¹⁹⁰ to China¹⁹¹ in thy search for knowledge.'

Leo is the navel of the house of the sun, hence the pure musk in the breath of the musk-deer.

But I am wrong. I speak not of the musk of Cathay, but of that produced by the Lion of God.

Were his knowledge to take the form of a sea, the Black Sea would be but a single drop in it.

He could not endure to be in debt; therefore he hired himself to a Jew. Someone said to him: 'Why hast thou done this?' He was angry and wielding his tongue like a sword he answered:

'I had rather remove rocks from mountain-tops than be in the debt of men.

[*Ri. 28*]

They say to me: "It is shameful to work for one's living." But I say: "It is shameful to stoop so low as to beg."¹⁹²

That the four pillars of the Law are ever flourishing is due to the two fathers-in-law and the two sons-in-law of the Prophet.

[*Ro. 24*]

Invocation of the Spirit¹⁹³

Come, musk of the soul, open thy musk-bladder, for thou art the deputy of the Vicar of God.

The words 'The Spirit proceedeth at my Lord's command'¹⁹⁴ were revealed concerning thee; the throne of the spiritual kingdom is thine.

Both worlds together are but a handful of dust; the holy place is in a pure kingdom.

The whole universe is tied to thee; earth and heaven are joined to thee.

Thou art joined to us and yet severed from us; thou are far removed from our eyes and yet thou art in them.

Paradise, Hell and Judgment Day are all signs for thy name.

Thou givest the angels knowledge by means of a secret sign; thou givest God's creatures attributes in a hundred different forms.

If thou shine like a hundred suns, each of thy rays creates a hundred suns.

Since the light of thy sun is ever increasing, one of its rays is the glorious Empyrean.

Thou art the eternal companion of the Almighty. What more shall I say, for thou hast always been known?

Thou art a strange bird. I do not know what thou art, for thou art outside our affirmation and negation.

Since thou art neither on earth nor in heaven, where are thou? Thou art with the Lord of the Worlds.

Thou art everything and also nothing. What do I say? Thou are straight and thou art crooked.

Breathe out a musk-laden breath from thy pure heart; for the Empyrean is the censer for that breath.

Thou art king and caliph for ever. Thou hast six sons, each of them without a peer.

Each of thy sons is a lord of the conjunction, each of them like a whole world in his own art.

[*Ri.* 29]

One is the carnal soul, with his abode in the senses. One is Satan, with his thoughts fixed on vain imaginings.

One is intelligence, and speaks of intelligible things. One is knowledge and seeks after ascertainable things.

One is poverty and strives after privation, and one is the belief in God's oneness and seeks to find the whole in every essence.

When these six shall have followed the commandment they shall attain to the Eternal Presence.

Since thou art caliph until eternity to come, it is by thy grace that the world is filled with subtleties.

Don the black robes of caliph like Adam; travel within thy breast as though it were the world.

Like Khidr¹⁹⁵ set thy foot upon the road of the saints, so that the circling heavens may not overtake thee.

[*Ro.* 25]

Thy place, O highest leader, is Noah's ark, and thy time the Forenoon¹⁹⁶ and the Night of Power.¹⁹⁷

Take thy seat, like Solomon, upon the throne, but with the ring on thy finger.

Display the beauty of Joseph, but see with all thy seven limbs like Abraham.

Like the Prophet David play this melody; like Jesus breathe the love of thy friend.

Being the companion of Moses, the son of 'Imrān,¹⁹⁸ drink the water of life from the cup of thy soul.

Spread thy wings in the shade of the Sīmurgh;¹⁹⁹ sit down with Idrīs²⁰⁰ and practise alchemy.

After thou hast made endeavours without number, thou shalt receive aid from the light of the Prophet.

When thou hast achieved this perfection in the Faith, thou shalt be allowed to utter words.

Do not look with the eye of contempt upon words, for both worlds are filled with the single word 'Be!'²⁰¹

The foundations of both worlds are nothing but a word for they were created with the word 'Be!' and can be destroyed with the words 'Be not!'

The word was sent down by God almighty; it was the glory of the Prophets.

If Moses is known as the Interlocutor,²⁰² it is because the speech of God made him so.

And had not Jesus been the Word of God, how should he in his glory have been the Pure Spirit?

[*Ri. 30*]

Mohammed also, he that was meant by the word 'Be!' was king on the night of his ascension because of the power of the word.

Words are the currency of both worlds: marriages and divorces are effected with them, and sales also.

When the future generations of lovers were drawn up before God, words were the basis of their contract and covenant.

Whatever thou hast to do with, something seen or heard, something tasted of forbidden.

Something touched or smelt, something understood or imagined,

Be it thought or idle fancy, possible or impossible,

It is all limited, except when put into words. The Preserved Table²⁰³ is all-embracing because of the power of words.

Appreciation and allusion can be expressed in a hundred different ways.

From this argument it is clear to the intellect that it is concerned no longer with things, but with words.

Since words are the basis of everything, do everything with words; beg with them, ask with them, seek with them.

[Ro. 26]

Discourse I

One who had travelled the world and lost his friends, a man bewildered of heart and disturbed of mind,

Had the tale from a man who knew thereof that once a certain caliph had six sons.

All were by nature of lofty ambition and had not dismissed feelings of pride from their minds.

Of all the sciences of their time they were each without peer in every one.

Since they were each of them masters of the arts of this world, since each of them was an Adam in both worlds,

Their father made them sit together one day. 'You are all', he said, 'conversant with the knowledge of the world.

[Ri. 31]

You are a caliph's sons, you are kings—what does each of you ask of the world?

If you have a hundred wishes or if but one, tell me, each of you.

When I know how each of you thinks I will order the affairs of each in accordance with his desire.'

One of the princes was the first to reveal his secret. 'It is related', he said, 'by the great and eminent

That the king of the peris has a virgin daughter to whom the moon cannot be compared.

She is as beautiful as the mind and as delicate as the soul. She is the fairest in earth or heaven.

If I can entirely realise this wish, it is all I crave until Judgment Day.

Being with such a beauty how should anyone seek any perfection beyond this?

He that is near to the sun, how should he wish for a single beam?

Such is my desire, and if I have it not, nothing but madness shall be my faith.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'Beware of lust, for with lust thou art very drunk.

When a man's heart is imprisoned in venery, all the coin of his being will be spent.

But every woman who is manlike in her conduct is a complete stranger to such lust,

[Ro. 27]

Just as that woman who was separated from her husband became the leader of men in the court of God.²

(1) Story of the virtuous woman whose husband had gone on a journey¹

'There was a fair and beautiful woman, night and day were the patterns of her cheeks and locks.

She had much kindness and goodness and joined therewith virtue and continence.

In goodness she was a sign to the whole world; she had charm and she also had sweetness.

[Ri. 32]

In every hair on her head that idol had more than fifty or even sixty curls.

Her eyes and eyebrows were *ṣād* and *nūn*:³ proof thereof was a decisive text, it was not like *nūn*.³

When she opened her shining cornelians,⁴ she would slay the mighty with the water of Khidr.⁵

Thou mightest say that her smiling lips were a shell whereof the pearls were her teeth.

Gem-like beneath the smiling rubies of her lips the pearls of her teeth displayed their brightness.

Her chin was like a silver apple: from her apple mankind suffered affliction.

The heavens from the picture of her face were such that their soul reeled in the manner of her lovers.

Those who scattered pearls for words called her by the name of Marjūma.⁶

She was a woman such that the revolution of the turning wheel accounted her amongst the number of lion-like man.

It so happened that the husband of that woman suddenly set out upon the Pilgrimage.

That man had a younger brother but he was an ungenerous man.

He charged him to take care of his property on behalf of his family.

When he had spoken these words he finally set out upon the Pilgrimage; his brother accepted what he had commanded.

He applied himself to his brother's command and took great care of his wife.

Night and day he continued to work for her; every hour he would send her something more.

One day he cast a glance at that woman: he saw through the veil the face of that enchanting one.

His heart was lost and his head turned—nay, how shall I say what happened to him?

[*Ro.* 28]

So had he fallen into the snare of that beauty that in one moment a hundred lives were spent.

He struggled with his reason, but every moment his love became more ardent.

Since he could not have his way with the woman, for a while he could do nothing with himself.

[*Ri.* 33]

When love prevailed and sense quickly departed he quickly revealed his feelings to the woman.

He summoned her to him with force and gold and lamentation; she drove him from her with contumely.

She said to him: "Art thou not ashamed before God? Dost thou thus show respect to thy brother?

Is this thy religion and thy probity? Dost thou thus keep trust for thy brother?

Go, repent, return to God, and eschew this wicked thought."

That man said to the woman: "It is no use; thou must satisfy me at once,

Otherwise I will cease to concern myself about thee, I will expose thee to shame, I will slight thee.

Straightaway now I shall cast thee to destruction, I shall cast thee into a fearful plight."

The woman said to him: "I do not fear destruction. The destruction of this world is better for me than such destruction."

Now that wicked man feared lest the woman would tell his brother what had happened.

That vile person went off and in order to protect himself straightaway bought with gold four persons,

So that those vile wretches gave testimony that this woman had been guilty of adultery.

When her case had been heard by the *cadi* he at once sentenced her to be stoned.

They took her into the open country on to the high road and they cast stones upon her from all sides.

When stones without number had been cast upon that woman, they thought that her soul had departed from her.

As a warning to mankind they left her there just as she was.

The luckless woman was left upon the plain, left in the midst of the blood-soaked dust.

When the night had passed and day broken, the woman at last came a little to herself again.

She moaned in lamentation and weakness; from her narcissus she covered her Judas-tree with tulips.⁷

At dawn a Bedouin mounted on a camel was coming that way from some direction.

[*Ri.* 34]

He heard that lamentation and became beside himself; he dismounted from his camel and went towards the woman.

"O woman", he asked, "who art thou who wast living like one dead?"

The woman said to him: "I am sick and distressed." The Bedouin said: "I will tend thee."

[*Ro.* 29]

He set her upon the camel and bore her hastily off; he carried her to his own abode.

He tended her assiduously day and night until that charmer was restored to health.

Again her charm began to return and to affect her companions.

Again the pomegranate flower of her face became fresh, from her head there fell in rings the girdle of her hair.

From beneath the stones of her stoning she came into plain view like a ruby out of hard rock.

Seeing her beauty the Bedouin passed sentence on his own life.

From love of her face he became beside himself, because of the pain he suffered the shirt on his body became a winding sheet.

He said to the woman: "Become my lawful spouse, for I have died; restore me to life by union with me."

The woman said to him: "Since I have a husband, now can I look for another?"

When his love had passed all bounds, in the end he called that woman to him in private.

The woman said to him: "O one whose head is turned away from the Faith, art thou not afraid of God's anger?"

For the Almighty's sake thou didst tend me—hast thou now obeyed the command of a vile demon?

When thou hast done a good deed do not spoil it; do not make a breach in the Ka'ba of good faith.

For when I did not agree to this thing, I suffered many an affliction and was stoned.

Now thou too dost call me to this thing—knowest thou not how pure of faith I am?

If thou rend my person into a thousand pieces, there shall be no blemish on my pure body.

Begone, for the sake of thy lust do not purchase with thy soul eternal torment."

[*Ri.* 35]

Because of the honesty of that pure woman, the Bedouin took her as his sister.

He repented of entertaining that thought, for that practice was the work of the devil.

The Bedouin had a black slave: that black suddenly came in from a journey.

When he saw that woman's face he gave her his heart; his heart and soul burnt up and he yielded up his body.

In his heart there arose the desire for union with that woman, but that desire could not be accomplished.

He said to the woman: "I am the night, thou art like the moon—why wilt thou not be together with me?"

The woman said to him: "That shalt thou never accomplish, for thy master asked this of me many times.

Since he, the moon-faced one, did not then obtain union with me, how shalt thou afterwards, O black-faced one?"

The slave said to her: "Dost thou turn me away? Thou shalt not escape from me until thou deliverest me.

Otherwise I shall boldly devise some trick so that thou shalt depart from this tent a wanderer."

[*Ro.* 30]

The woman said to him: "Do what thou wilt. Why should I fear, for I care not even if my fate is destruction."

The slave became exceedingly angry with her; after being thus to her from love, he became thus.

One night he rose up because of the spite that he bore. His master's wife had a handsome child.

He killed that child in its cradle and then took that bloodstained knife And hid it under that woman's pillow as though to say, "The cruel woman shed the blood."

At dawn the mother of that poor murdered child awoke in order to suckle it.

She beheld that child with severed head; she raised a cry from her pain-filled heart.

She filled the world with her clamour and lamentation, she cut off her plaits and bound them around her waist.

They sought to find who had done that thing, who had rendered lifeless so helpless a creature.

[Ri. 36]

From under the woman's pillow there emerged into view a bloodstained dagger.

They all said: "The woman did this deed; this worthless one slew him so vilely."

The slave and the mother of the child beat that young woman more than can be said.

The Bedouin came and said: "O woman, what harm did I do thee

That thou shouldst slay an infant like unto a moon and shouldst not fear the blood of an innocent?"

The woman said: "Who has recorded [the like of] this in the world? God, O my brother, gave thee reason

That thou mightest apply thy reason and understanding, that thou mightest have thy share of reason.

Look with the eye of reason, O chaste one. Thou hast done me so much good.

For God's sake thou hast taken me as thy sister and many kindnesses thou hast shown me.

Is this the way that I would repay thee? Consider. What honour would come to me from this killing?"

The Bedouin, because he was wise in the ways of the world, was convinced by the woman's words.

He was certain that that woman was innocent but also that it was impossible for her to remain.

He said to the woman: "Since such a thing has fallen out, to see thee is from now on an abomination to the heart.

My wife, since she cast the suspicion of this upon thee, because of thee thinks of her child every moment.

Every hour her grief will be renewed, her affliction will become immeasurable.

She will speak ill to thee and not treat thee well, and if I treat thee well she will not.

Thou must depart from here of thy own accord." And in secret he straightway gave her three hundred dirhems,

Saying "Spend this upon thyself on the journey." The woman took the dirhems and went her way.

[Ro. 31]

When that griefstricken one had gone a little way along the road, there suddenly appeared a village in the distance.

She saw a gallows set up beside the road with people gathered around it from every direction.

[Ri. 37]

They were about to hang from the gallows that day a young man sore

of heart and heavily afflicted.

That woman asked a man: "Who is this? Tell me what his crime is?"

They said to her: "This village is the property of an emir who in the practice of injustice is without a peer.

In this village, O discriminating one, it is the custom that whoever cannot pay the poll-tax.

Is hanged upside down by this tyrant—now he will drag him to the gallows."

The woman said to him: "How much is the tax which he needs at this moment?"

They told her: "It is well known. Every year his tax is exactly three hundred dirhems."

The woman said to herself, like the kind person she was: "Redeem him now with thy life.

As thou didst escape with thy life from stones and gallows, with thy life redeem him from the gallows."

She said the them: "If I give this money will he be sold to me?"

They said: "At once."

She quickly gave them those three hundred dirhems so that that young man was quickly relieved of grief.

When she had given the dirhems the woman set off at once; the young man sped after like an arrow.

When he saw the woman's face from afar, his soul came up to his lips and his laments arose to heaven.

He became giddy and cried out: "Why did she free me from the gallows?

Because if I had lost my life suddenly on the gallows I should never have suffered anything like my love for this moon-faced one."

He spoke much with the woman, but how should that profit him? For the woman was not fire, how should she have that smoke?

He walked much with the woman and pleaded with her; he brought her nothing therefrom but shame.

The woman said to him: "Is this how thou dost treat me? Thus I did and such is my reward?"

The young man said to her: "Thou hast stolen my heart and soul. How shall I turn away me head from thee for a single moment?"

The woman said to him: "If thou dost not turn away thy head from me, thou shalt not have even the slightest union with me."

[*Ri.* 38]

They walked a long way, talking and listening, until they both came to the sea.

On the shore was a heavily laden ship, all full of merchandise and merchants.

Since that young man despaired of [winning] the woman, he called

one of the merchants to him,

Saying, "I have a slave-girl like a moon. She has no fault save haughtiness.

I have seen none as disobedient as she—how long shall I put up with her giddiness?

[Ro. 32]

Although there is none like her in appearance, I will not endure her evil disposition.

I have striven much. How long must I strive? Now, if thou wishest I will sell her to thee."

The woman said to that merchant: "Beware, never purchase me from him.

For I am a married woman and free and it was I who saved him from injustice."

The merchant did not listen to her words; he bought her from him for a hundred dinars.

With a hundred acts of harshness they put her aboard the ship and they launched it from thence straightway.

When the purchaser saw the shape and mien beneath the veil he sold his soul for her.

His heart was storm-tossed in that sea; the crocodile of his lust gathered strength.

He approached the woman. She fell down, saying, "Come to my aid, O people, come to my aid

You are Muslims and I am a Muslim; you believe and I believe.

I am free and a married woman—God is my true witness at this moment.

You too have mothers and sisters, you too have daughters behind the curtain.

If anyone meditated this evil against them you would no doubt be distraught.

Since you would not approve that they should be so treated, why should you now approve that I should be so treated?

I am a stranger, a woman, poor and in distress, I am weak and feeble, vile and abject.

[Ri. 39]

Do not offend the Consumer of Souls any more, for there is a tomorrow after today."

Since that woman was eloquent and sincere, the crew of the ship had compassion on her.

All at once the crew of the ship became her friends, they became the protectors of that sorrowful woman.

But whoever beheld her face sold a hundred hearts for the love thereof.

In a word the crew of the ship became in the end madly enamoured of her.
For a long time they spoke to one another of their love for her, for a long time they concealed that love from her.

Since every heart was filled with longing for her they all came to an agreement

That they should suddenly seize that woman and satisfy their desires by force.

When the woman learned of these wicked men's feelings, she saw the whole sea as a liver from her heart's blood.

She opened her mouth [and said]: "O Knower of Secrets, preserve me from the evil of these wicked men.

In both worlds I have no one but Thee. Remove this desire from the hearts of these men.

[Ro. 33]

If Thou wilt grant me death, Thou canst, for death is better than such life.

Give me liberation or death today, for I cannot endure in this agony.

How long wilt thou cause me to walk in blood? Thou wilt find none more wretched than I."

When she had spoken these words and lost consciousness, because of that woman the water of the sea began to swell.

A fire arose from that burning water so that the sea shone like hell.

In one moment the people of that ship were all together hurled head-long into the fire.

They were all at once turned to ashes, but the goods of all of them remained behind.

A wind came in from the side and brought the ship to a town.

[Ri. 40]

The woman cast those ashes overboard and made herself men's clothes.

So that in order to escape from the clutches of lovemaking she might hold up her head like a man.

Many people came along the road from the town: they saw a young man [handsome] as the moon,

Seated alone in that ship, and with a whole world of goods tightly bundled.

They questioned that sun-checked one, asking, "Hast thou come alone with all these goods?"

She said to them: "Until I come before the king I shall tell my tale to no one."

They told the king about her, saying, "Today a young man has arrived, who is handsome indeed,

Alone, having brought a vessel loaded with goods: he will tell nothing more.

He asks for thee that he may speak and tell the tale of the vessel and those goods."

The king marvelled and set out; he came to that moon of the age.

The wise king questioned her and she spoke as follows: "There were many of us.

We embarked on a ship and voyaged a long way, all the time day and night.

When the idle ones on that ship saw me, they chose in their lust to love me.

I prayed to God and He so wrought that He averted the evil of that handful of wicked men.

A fire came down and consumed them all; He saved me and illuminated my soul.

See, but one remains left; it is not a man but [only] black charcoal.

From this I received a warning: I have no wish for the goods of this world.

Take them all, they are wares without number; but I crave one boon of thee,

[Ro. 34]

That on the shore of this sea thou shalt build for me a fair shrine in which I may worship,

And shalt say that no person, clean or unclean, shall have aught to do with me.

[Ri. 41]

For since it has chanced that I have come to rest here, I will worship God day and night."

When the king and the army heard her words and beheld her miraculous powers,

So much did they believe in her straightway that they swerved not a hair's breadth from her command.

They erected for her such a shrine that thou wouldst say it was the Ka'ba itself.

She entered it and engaged in devotion: she lived for a long time in contentment.

When that king fell into the snare of death, he summoned his ministers and army.

He said to them: "It seems to me fitting, since I am departing from this world,

That this hermit youth should be your commander and king in my place.

In order that the people may be at ease because of him, execute this will, O men."

He spoke thus, and his pure soul ascended to heaven, and this earth

swallowed him up beneath its dust.

Straightway the ministers gathered together and assembled the emirs and people.

They went before that woman and told her the secret: they declared to her the king's will and testament.

They said to her: "Any command that thou wouldst make is in thy power, for this kingdom is thine.

The woman of course had no desire for this office, for how shall a hermit become a ruler?

They said to her: "O holy one, choose sovereignty. Why make excuses?"

The woman said to them: "Since there is no escape therefrom, I must have a wife like unto a piece of the moon.

I should have a maid as my lawful spouse for I am grown weary of solitude."

The nobles said: "O king, ask for the daughter of any of us thou wilt."

[*Ri.* 42]

She said to them: "Send a hundred maidens, but send them all with their mothers,

So that I too may see each one of them and choose her whom I wish from all of them."

The nobles with all their heart sent that same day a hundred beautiful maidens.

They all went forward with their mothers; beside themselves with bashfulness they went.

That woman revealed herself to them saying, "How is kingship fitting to a woman?

[*Ro.* 35]

Tell these words to your husbands and relieve me of this heavy burden."

The women departed dumbfounded and informed the nobles thereof.

All those who heard it, great and small, marvelled at the case of the woman.

They sent back a woman to her to say: "Since thou art the proud heir apparent,

Set someone over us as king or else rule thyself like a man."

She chose someone acceptable from amongst them all and then concerned herself with her own affairs.

With her own hand she set up a king, she did not budge for a kingdom.

As for thee, my son, for a piece of bread thou wouldst turn the whole world upside down.

A woman did not budge for a kingdom—show me a single man like that.

The whole world heard the fame of that woman, how in such-and-such a place there was such-and-such a person,

Whose prayers were answered like no one else's, a woman who had no

equal amongst men.

Many a paralytic became from her breath such that he walked and moved about.

Many a report was spread about her through the world, no one knew her [true] measure.

When that woman's husband returned from the Pilgrimage he nowhere saw her face.

Suddenly he beheld a desolate household, his brother blind and bewildered.

Neither his hands nor his feet could move, for he had become paralysed and fixed to one place.

[*Ri. 43*]

Night and day he was stricken with grief for that woman, the torment of hell had gripped his skirt.

Now his soul burned on account of his brother, now it burned on account of his ceaseless pain.

His brother questioned him about his wife; he began to relate his story to his brother:

"That woman had committed adultery with a soldier and a number of people (strange to tell!) had testified against her.

When the *cadi* heard these words from those people, it pleased him to sentence her to be stoned.

Then he caused her to be cruelly stoned. Do thou remain, for she has departed."

When that deserted man heard these words he was exceedingly grieved at her death and depravity.

Having wept and beaten himself he went into a corner and mourned and held his peace.

When he saw his brother in so sore a case, none of his limbs functioning except his tongue,

He said to him: "O handless and footless one, I have heard that at this present time in such-and-such a place,

[*Ro. 36*]

There is a woman as famous as the sun, whose prayers are answered by God.

Many a blind person has become seeing through her prayers, many a helpless paralytic has begun to walk.

If thou wilt I will take thee thither—perhaps that woman will restore thee to health."

That man's heart was glad. He said: "Hurry. I am lost. If thou wilt, help me."

Now that good man had a donkey; he bound him upon that donkey and took to the road.

By chance they came one day upon that road, upon that Bedouin at night-time.

Since that Bedouin was a chivalrous man, he made them both his guests that night.

The Bedouin entered into conversation with them [asking]: "Whither are you going from here?"

The woman's husband said to him: "I have heard a tale that a woman hermit utters prayers

Such that many blind persons and afflicted ones have recovered on account of her charms and prayers.

[*Ri. 44*]

This brother of mine too has fallen ill; he is afflicted with paralysis and blindness.

I am taking him to that woman, so that perhaps he may walk again and become possessed of sight."

Then the Bedouin said to him: "Some time ago a very wise woman chanced to come here.

My slave used her violently and because of that wickedness he became paralysed and blind.

Now I shall bring him with you also—perhaps he too will be cured by that woman's prayer."

In the end they set out and travelled many a stage. In that village they reached that stage

Where they had been about to hang that young man on the gallows; there was a room which they took.

The room was worthy of that caravan, for it belonged to that tyrannous young man.

The young man, strange to relate, was paralysed; neither sight was left nor [the use of] his hands and feet.

They said to one another: "This is our case also, for we have the same goods, and this is our grief.

Since we have acquired his coin, it is fitting that we should have alighted here."

The young man's mother was there also; when she saw two handless and footless ones,

She enquired about their pain and affliction, and they straightway told her the true story.

That woman wept a great deal and said: "I too have a son, one like these two persons.

I will come with you." She sprang up and bound her son tightly upon a mount.

All three set out together and came to that woman at dawn-time.

At dawn the morning of happiness breathed; the hermit woman came

out from her place of retirement.

[Ro. 37]

She beheld her husband from afar and from joy prostrated herself in worship.

The woman wept much; she said, "How in my confusion can I go out?

What shall I do or what shall I say to my husband, for I cannot show my face?"

[Ri. 45]

When she looked further back behind him she saw those three persons; she saw the three enemies of her life-blood.

She said to herself: "It is enough that my husband has brought witnesses with him as companions.

All three are great sinners and their hands and feet bear witness thereto.

When I see the eyes of all three, what more do I wish? What need I say? God is sufficient witness."

The woman came and cast many a glance at her husband, but she threw a veil over her face.

She said to her husband: "State what thou wishest." That godly man answered: "I have come here for a prayer, for I have with me a blind and sorely afflicted one."

The woman said to him: "This is a sinful man: if he confesses his crime,

He will be freed from this unseemly pain; otherwise he will remain blind and afflicted."

The man who had been on the Pilgrimage asked his brother, saying: "Since thou art exhausted and full of need,

Pronounce thy sin so that thou mayst be saved, otherwise thou shalt be the eternal partner of grief."

His brother said: "Pain and suffering for a hundred years would be better for me than to speak of this matter."

They talked for a long time until at last he was shamed into telling the whole tale from beginning to end.

"I am," he said, "a cripple on account of that crime. Now, if thou wilt, kill me, and if thou wilt, forgive me."

His brother, having reflected for a while, although it was difficult for him,

Said to himself, "Since my wife has disappeared, I shall at any rate save my brother."

He forgave him in the end; the woman prayed and in a single moment freed him from a hundred pains.

He again could walk and grasp; his eyes could see again.

[Ri. 46]

Then the slave's master asked him to declare his crime truthfully.

The slave said to him: "If thou preparest to kill me, I dare not repeat my crime."

Then the Bedouin said to him: "Speak truly, for today this fear of thine for me has departed.

I have forgiven thee eternally—why dost thou fear? Why dost thou offer excuses?"

In the end he divulged that secret, saying, "I killed thy child in its cradle.

That woman was not guilty of the killing; because of my wicked deed I have become afflicted."

[Ro. 38]

When the woman saw that he was speaking the truth, she at once offered up a prayer: she made him both seeing and capable of supplying his wants.

The old woman likewise brought her son forward, and that man too declared his crime.

He said to her: "A woman came to my rescue when, all at once, she redeemed me from the gallows.

The woman redeemed me with her life, and then I sold her. My tale is short."

The woman prayed so that that young man also in a moment was able to see and move.

Then she sent them all out and told her husband to remain standing there.

In front of him she drew the veil from her face: her husband gave out a cry as soon as he was aware.

He lost consciousness; when he came to, the kind-hearted woman came before him.

She said to him: "What came upon thee suddenly that thou didst cry out and fall to the ground?"

He said to her: "I had a wife and for a moment I thought that thou wert she.

Thy limbs and hers are such that one cannot say there is a hair of difference between them.

One would say that thou art exactly like my wife in speech, mien, stature and gait.

Were she not dissolved in the dust, this griefstricken one would say that thou art she."

That woman said to him: "Glad tidings, O man, for that woman did not sin or commit adultery.

[Ri. 47]

I am that woman; I walked in the path of religion, I was not stoned and I did not die.

God rescued me from many a tribulation; by His grace He brought me to this corner.

And now a hundred thanks to God every moment, Who has granted us this reunion."

That man fell to the ground in worship, saying, "O pure God,
How shall my tongue offer thanks to Thee, seeing that this is beyond the limits of my heart and soul?"

He went out and called his companions and told them that tale and all that good and evil.

There rose a shout and a cry to heaven from every tongue.

The slave, the brother and that young man also, were filled with shame but with rejoicing also.

As that woman first of all put them to shame, she afterwards gave wealth to them and forgave them.

When she had made her husband king she gave the viziership to the Bedouin.

When she had laid that happy foundation, she busied herself in that same place with the worship of God.'

[Ro. 39]

Discourse II

The son said to him: 'If there were not this carnal desire and if there were no private intercourse between husband and wife,

There would be no continuance of the creatures of this world and no order would be left in the universe.

Were it not for this dispensation and blending the whole of the kingdom would be in disarray.

Aye, a thousand and one persons must be set in order ere thou canst properly put a morsel of food into thy mouth.

It is by wisdom that those who minister in this way continue work from month to month.

The earth shines from foam and the heavens from smoke¹ because if something were not necessary it would not exist.

If it were not for carnal desire neither thou nor I should be in the world.

Thou wilt cast out carnal desire from men—inform my heart of the secret thereof.'

[Ri. 48]

Father's reply

His father said to him: 'Heaven forbid that thou shouldst think that I would do away altogether with the thought of carnal desire.

But since thou hast chosen this from the world and hast both spoken and heard of this,

It is as though from a hundred worlds of secrets thou art conversant only with that of carnal desire.

I have told thee this in private that thou mayst step outside carnal desire.

When it is possible to be the confidant of Jesus who would wish to be the companion of an ass?

Why dost thou associate thyself with an ass in carnal desire, when thou couldst be closetted with Jesus?

Since, after all, this lust is a thing of one moment only, is it not better to have eternal privacy [with the loved one]?

Since the Eternal allows thee to be alone with Him for ever, forego the ephemeral, i.e. carnal desire.

For carnal desire such privacy is not desired—whoever does not possess

this secret is defective.

But when carnal desire reaches its culmination, from carnal desire there is born passionate love without limit.

But when passionate love becomes very strong, there arises spiritual love.

When spiritual love reaches its uttermost limit, thy soul becomes annihilated in the loved one.

Forgo carnal desire, for it is not the goal: the root of everything is the loved one, the loved one.

If thou art cruelly slain in that pathway it is better than being entrapped in carnal desire.'

[Ro. 40]

(1) Story of the woman who became enamoured of a prince²

'A king had a silver-breasted son in whose lovelock the Moon herself was ensnared.

No one beheld the face of that prince who did not turn the face of his heart towards that beauteous lad.

[Ri. 49]

So much was he the wonder of the world, that the world, all of it, was his lover.

His eyebrows, which were of the same shape as a bow, were the two chamberlains at the door of the sultan, his soul.

When a man's eye saw the arrow of his eyelashes his heart would yield itself up to that arrow and choose to be a quiver to it.³

Who saw the eyebrows of that ravisher of hearts who did not make his heart a bow-case for that bow?

His mouth had joined together thirty gems and confined them within the two lustrous rubies of his lips.

The down on his cheeks⁴ issued *fatwās* for lovers: in beauty it was like his arched eyebrows.⁵

His chin, a ball struck bravely into the field, struck off the heads of brave men.

A woman became distraught with love of that fair one; her heart lamented much and turned to blood.

When separation from him gained the victory over her and thereby made her bewildered and sore of heart,

She spread ashes beneath her and, since she was fire, made them her abode.

All night she wailed for that fair one; now she wept blood, now she heaved a sigh.

If some day that fair one went out into the countryside, the hapless woman would run along on the road.

Like a ball she would run before his horse trailing her plaits like two polo-sticks.

She would gaze backwards upon that fair one; like rain she would scatter tears upon the road.

A hundred sergeants in succession beat her with their staves but she neither cried out nor made a disturbance.

A great crowd of people used to be spectators of this and would point the woman out to the men.

All the men were amazed at her, and the poor woman still remained in her bewildered state.

In the end, when this matter had exceeded all bounds, the prince's heart became grieved with this burden.

He said to his father: "How much of this mendicity? Deliver me from the disgrace of this woman."

[*Ri. 50*]

The lofty king commanded as follows: "Bring that yearling straightway on to the square.

Bind her to his hindfeet by the hair and make him gallop fast across the crossroads,

So that the wretched woman may be torn to pieces and the world rid of her affair.

The horse will kill her on the highway like a rutting elephant, and the pawn will not again look at the king."⁶

[*Ro. 41*]

The king and the prince went on to the square, and a great crowd of people stood watching,

All shedding tears of blood out of sorrow for that woman, and from that blood the ground became like a bed of pomegranate flowers.

When the soldiers rushed together to bind her hair to the horse's feet,

The poor distraught woman fell down before the king, she threw herself down in order to crave a boon.

"Since", she said, "thou wilt kill me, and that in cruel fashion, I have one last request—wilt thou grant it?"

The king said to her: "If thy request be that I spare thy life, know that I intend to take it.

And if thou say; 'Do not cause me to be dragged by the hair', I shall not shed thy blood otherwise than at the feet of the horse.

And if thou say, 'Give me grace for a little while', this is not possible without pardon.

And if thou ask to be together with the prince for a while, thou shalt not see his face."

The woman said to him: "I do not ask for my life nor do I ask for grace for a little while.

I do not say, O beneficent king, 'Do not put me to death dragged head-long by the feet of the horse.'

If the king of the world will grant it me, I have a request other than these four.

That request is all I ask until eternity." The king said: "Speak. What is that request? For if thou forgo those four thou shalt have whatever thou askest for."

The woman said to him: "If today thou must needs put me to death in wretched fashion under a horse's hooves,

This is my request, O Lord, that thou bind my hair to *his* horse's feet,

So that when the horse gallops for that purpose, *he* will abjectly kill me under the feet of his horse,

So that when I am slain by that fair one I shall in that way be alive for ever.

Aye, if I am slain by my beloved, from the light of love I shall be above the star 'Aiyūq.⁷

I am a woman. I have not so much manliness. My heart has turned to blood. It is as though I had no life left.

At such a time grant a woman like me, who deserves it, this small request, which it is easy to grant."

Because of the woman's sincerity and devotion the king's heart was softened. What do I say? From his tears the earth became mud.

He pardoned her and sent her to the palace; like one with a new life he sent her to her loved one.—

Come, O man, if thou art our companion, learn from a woman what true love is.

And if thou art less than women, cover thy head. Thou art not less than a catamite. Listen to this tale.'

[*Ro.* 42]

(2) Story of the 'Alid, the scholar and the catamite who were taken prisoner in Rūm⁸

'An 'Alid,⁹ a scholar and a catamite were carrying all their goods to Rūm.

These three persons were waylaid by the infidels and dragged unexpectedly before the idol.¹⁰

The infidels said to the three: "You must needs worship the idol,

Otherwise we shall shed the blood of all three; we shall give you no grace but shall shed it now."

Those three masters said to those infidels: "You must give one night's grace,

So that we may consider in this one night whether it is possible to practise idolatry."

They gave those three persons one night's grace so that they might each commune with themselves.

The 'Alid spoke and said: "I must gird on the Christian's belt¹¹ before the idol,

[*Ri.* 52]

For I have full authority from my ancestor;¹² he will intercede on my behalf tomorrow."

The scholar spoke and said: "I too cannot bid farewell to body and soul.

If I bow my head before the idol, I shall raise up an intercessor in my learning in the Faith."

The catamite said: "I am lost indeed, for I am left without the help of an intercessor.

Since you have an intercessor and I have not, this worship is not lawful for me.

If they cut off my head like a candle, why should I fear? I cannot worship an idol, for that is perdition.

I will not bow my head to the ground before the idol, even tho' they ruthlessly sever the head from my body."—

When those two preferred life the catamite in such a situation quitted him like a man.

A strange thing that at the time of testing it is the catamite who is to be praised for manliness!

When Qārūns¹³ go naked along this road, lions seek the protection of ants.

If thou art less than a catamite in thy love of what thou desirest, thou art surely not less than an ant upon this road.'

(3) Story of Solomon the son of David and the lovesick ant¹⁴

'Solomon, in the midst of all his occupations, passed by a swarm of ants on the roadside.

All the ants came forward to do obeisance; in an hour many thousands had come.

But one ant did not come quickly before him because there was a mound of earth in front of its home.

[*Ro.* 43]

With the speed of the wind that ant was carrying out each separate particle of earth so that that mound might be cleared away.

Solomon summoned it and said: "O ant, I perceive thee to be without strength or endurance,

And yet if thou wert to acquire the lifespan of Noah and the patience of Job, thy task would not be accomplished.

[Ri. 53]

This is no task for the arm of thy likes; *thou* wilt not cause this mound to disappear."

The ant opened its mouth and said: "O king, by high endeavour one can proceed along this road.

Look not at my constitution and build, have regard to the perfection of my endeavour.

There is a certain she-ant who is invisible to me and who had drawn me into the snare of her love.

She has said to me: 'If thou removest this mound of earth from here and clearest the way,

I will cast on one side the boulder of separation from thee and then sit together with thee.'

Now my lions are girded for this task; I know about nothing except this carrying of earth.

If this earth is made to disappear I can achieve union with her,

And if I die in this endeavour, at least I shall not be an idle boaster and a liar."—

Friend, learn of love from an ant; learn of such sight from one who is blind.

Though the ant's cloak is very black, yet it is one of the attendants on the road.

Look not with contempt upon an ant, for it too has passion in its heart.

I know not what state of affairs it is upon this road when a lion is chid by an ant.'

(4) Story of the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī and the ant¹⁵

'Alī was walking one day at noontide when he happened to injure an ant upon the road.

The ant was helplessly kicking its feet in the air and 'Alī was filled with distress at its impotence.

He was afraid and became exceedingly agitated: such a lion was overturned by an ant.

He wept a great deal and tried many devices to make the ant walk again.

In the night he saw Mohammed in a dream. Mohammed said to him: "O 'Alī, hurry not along the road,

[*Ri. 54*]

Because for two days thou hast filled the heavens with mourning on account of one ant.

Art thou heedless of where thou art treading that thou shouldst injure an ant upon the way?

[*Ro. 44*]

—Such an ant as was full of secret meaning and whose activity it was to praise the name of God?”

‘Ali began to tremble in all his members—the Lion of God fell into a snare on account of an ant.

The Prophet said: “Be of good heart and do not worry, for that same ant interceded for thee with God,

Saying, ‘O Lord, I had no wish to accuse Ḥaidar.¹⁶ If he was an enemy to me he is so no longer.’”—

Know, O generous one, that it was from devotion to the Faith that such a lion behaved in such a way towards an ant.

What man, lion-like as Ḥaidar in courage, hast thou seen bound to the saddle-bow of an ant?

Happy is he who is informed of the Truth and lifts and puts down his feet in accordance with God’s commandment!

If thou walkest in absolute ignorance, thou art an absolute beggar even though thou art the son of kings.

One must look and then take a step, for one cannot take a step in the road without looking.

If thou take a step in the road without looking, in the end adversity will be thy reward.

When thou walkest blindly like an ass, thou art not distinguished from others by thy understanding.

Count thy steps as thou takest them if thou art a man of the road, for all is counted from the Moon down to the Fish.¹⁷

If thou take a step without any commandment, many a hurt wilt thou receive without any remedy.

If thou lift thy foot here for a short time, thou shalt not walk in thy grave for an eternity.

Whoever walks here for a time, consider that there he will walk for a hundred ages.

Though thou walkest here for a single moment, there it will be for a hundred eternities.

If today thou take one clean step, thou must not walk a hundred parasangs in the dust.

[*Ri. 55*]

Alas! thou dost not see the great gain; if thou didst thou wouldst not desist a moment from thy work.

For every step that thou takest today thou shalt receive from God a delightful gift.

When such profit is possible every moment, why out of heedlessness must one suffer harm ?

(5) Story of Nūshīrvān¹⁸ the Just and the aged cultivator¹⁹

'Nūshīrvān was riding his horse with the speed of an arrow when he saw in the road an old man [bent] like a bow.

The old man was planting a number of trees. The king said to him: "Since thy hair has turned to milk,

And since thou wilt remain only a few more days, why art thou planting trees here?"

The old man replied: "There is reason enough. Since many have planted for us,

[Ro. 45]

So that today we have the benefit thereof, we too are planting for others.

One should take each step in accordance with one's capacity, for in every step there should be order."

The king was pleased with the old man's speech. He filled his hand with gold and said: "Take this."

The old man said to him: "O victorious king, already today my trees have borne fruit.

For If I live to be over seventy thou knowest that I have not fared badly by this planting.

The planting did not make me wait ten years; it has borne gold as fruit this very day."

The king was even more pleased with this reply of his, and he bestowed upon him the land, the village and the water.—

Thou must perform thy labour today for without labour thou wilt have no fruit.

Thou must set thy foot on the road of the Faith, thou must lay aside vanity.

If thou art a man, then like a man make thy beard a broom for the privy.

Art thou not ashamed with all that strength of arm to place thy weight on the scales?

Thou art less than a dog. Listen to this story if thou think thyself more than a dog.'

[Ri. 56]

(6) Story of Master Jandī²⁰ and the dog²¹

‘Someone—and he was afraid of nobody—asked Master Jandī: “Art thou better or a dog?”’

Jandī’s disciples charged openly down upon him to tear him to pieces then and there.

Their master at once prevented them. He said to the man: “I am not aware of the decree of Destiny.

I have not ascertained, dear friend, what my case is—how then can I answer thee?

If my faith is greater than the rabble’s, then I can say that I am better than a dog.

And should my faith not be greater than the rabble’s, then would that I were even a hair’s breadth better than a dog!”—

Since the veil has not yet fallen away, do not regard thyself as being in the least way superior to a dog.

For if the dog’s road is through the dust, yet thou too art in the same case.’

(7) Story of Ma’shūq of Ṭūs,²² the dog and the horseman²³

‘Ma’shūq of Ṭūs was walking out along a road one noontide like one beside himself.

A dog came towards him on that road and in his forgetfulness he all at once threw a stone at it.

[Ro. 46]

He beheld in the distance a horseman clad in green coming up behind him, his face all light.²⁴

He struck him hard with a whip and said to him: “Have a care now, foolish one, have a care!

Dost thou know whom thou art throwing a stone at or that thou art by origin of the same nature as he?

Art not thou and he of one mould? Why dost thou consider him inferior to thyself?”—

Since the dog is not apart from the mould of Omnipotence, it is not lawful for thee to exalt thyself above a dog.

Dogs are concealed behind the curtain, friend. See whether thy kernel is purer than this shell.

[Ri. 57]

For although the appearance of the dog is unattractive, yet in him are qualities that ensure him a high position.

The dog is in possession of many secrets, but his outward appearance belies this.'

(8) Shaikh Abū Sa'īd's²⁵ argument with a Ṣūfī over a dog²⁶

'A Ṣūfī who was passing by struck with his staff at a dog lying on the road.

The dog was badly hurt in its front leg; it began to howl and went off at a run.

It came howling before Abū Sa'īd and threw itself on the ground, its heart boiling with rage.

When it had shown Abū Sa'īd its foot, he rose up and sought justice of that heedless Ṣūfī.

The shaikh said to the Ṣūfī: "O man without faith, has anyone ever dealt with such cruelty to a dumb creature?"

Hast thou broken its foot so that it has fallen down and become thus weak and helpless?"

The Ṣūfī spoke and said: "O master, the fault was not mine but the dog's,

Because it defiled my garment it received from my staff a blow not dealt in play."

Where the dog was lying it continued to howl and wave its legs.

That peerless shaikh said to the dog: "For all thou hast done,

I will gladly take the responsibility. Pass thy sentence now and do not postpone it till the Judgment Day.

If thou wish me to give him his answer, I will punish him on thy behalf here and now.

I do not wish thee to become angry; I wish thee to be pleased."

The dog said: "O peerless shaikh, since I saw his garb to be that of a Ṣūfī,

I was certain that he would do me no harm. How was I to know that he would burn my limbs with pain?

Had there been someone clad in mail on the road, I should have been on my guard.

[*Ri.* 58]

Seeing the garb of the people of peace I felt safe; I did not know the full story.

[*Ro.* 47]

If thou wilt punish him divest him now of this garb such as is worn by [true] men,

So that all may be safe from his wickedness: the injury he did me was such as I have not endured from drunkards.

Remove from him the cloak of the people of peace and his punishment will suffice until the Day of Judgment.”—

Since the dog holds such a position upon His road, it is forbidden for thee to set thyself above a dog.

If thou think thyself better than a dog, be sure that thou thinkest so because of thy doglike nature.²⁷

When they cast thee thus abjectly into the earth thou must fall head downwards,

Because as long as thou continuest to rear thy head there is no doubt that thy head will be bowed down even more.

Why boast so much about what is a handful of earth? For it was for the earth that they cut thy navel-string.

Those that are the lowest here be sure that they will be the purest there.

When men made themselves lowly like the earth they made body and soul pure in manliness.

The mighty ones on this road are elevated in rank because they have entirely renounced frowardness.’

(9) Story of Abu’l Faḍl Ḥasan²⁸ and his words on his death-bed²⁹

‘When Abu’l Faḍl Ḥasan lay on his deathbed, someone said to him: “O thou, by whom the Holy Law is upheld,

When the Joseph of thy soul is saved from the pit, we shall bury thee in such-and-such a place.”

The shaikh spoke and said: “Heaven forbid! for that is the place of the great and the pious.

How should I, who am no better than a hundred other wretches, wish to have my grave in such a place?”

They said to him: “O pure and good-hearted one, where dost thou wish thy dust to be?”

He opened his mouth with a soul filled with agitation and said “On the top of yonder hill my grave must be,

[*Ri.* 59]

For there lies many a tavern-frequenter and likewise a number of profitless thieves.

There are also many gamblers there: all are sinners there.

Bury me also with them: lay my head at their feet.

I have always been a fit companion for them, for essentially I have always been like a thief.

I belong among those sinners; I have not the strength to stand amongst those perfect ones.

For if these people are in great darkness, yet they are near to the light of His mercy.

When in a place there is thirst in the extreme, in the end it attracts water to itself.

[Ro. 48]

For whatever there is weakness the eye of mercy dwells there more often.”’

Discourse III

The son said: 'The purpose of a wife is that a worthy son should be born,

Because when a man has a peerless son there remains a good memory of him for ever.

If my son is enlightened he will intercede for me tomorrow.

If a dutiful son is born he is worth the price of a hundred lives.

Everyone should have such a son; in a son I should have such kin.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'A son is desirable, but only when a man is not possessed of faults.

Whoever is only a novice in this matter, if he have any child,

He becomes full of faults and is too much occupied; he is deprived of the secret of knowledge.

If thou wouldst have the faith of Abraham thou must receive instruction from the sacrifice of thy son.'

[*Ri. 60*]

(1) Question put by Ibrāhīm b. Adham¹ to a dervish²

'One day Ibrāhīm b. Adham asked a sorrowing dervish

Whether he had ever had wife and children. He said, "No." He said, "Bravo!"

The dervish said to him: "O man of men, why dost thou say thus? Enlighten me."

Then said Ibrāhīm: "O man, whatever unfortunate dervish takes a wife

Embarks on a ship without food or sleep, and if he then has children he will be drowned."—

When thy heart has become enchained because of children, then children become a sweet enemy to thee.

If thou art the lord of the conjunction in polite learning, thou art so no longer when children are born to thee.

Though thou art a revered ascetic, when thou hast children, thou shalt be a thorough debauchee.'

[Ro. 49]

(2) Story of Shaikh Gūrgānī³ and his cat⁴

‘That world of truth Shaikh Gūrgānī, who was the pole of his time in spiritual matters,

Had a cat in his monastery which he used to see several times a day.

They had fitted leather sheaths on to its paws

So that whenever it went out they should not get dirty.

Sometimes it would climb on to the shaikh’s lap, sometimes it would sleep on the prayer-rug.

When it had been there a while the shaikh would call out for a servant to come before him.

With his own hands he would tie on its boots and send it away from there.

It made its home in the kitchen where the meat used not to be hidden from it.

It never stole any, raw or cooked, taking only what was given it at the proper time.

[Ri. 61]

It was trusted in the monastery and at the table; no one ever saw it steal anything;

And then one day in the kitchen at night it suddenly snatched some meat from the pan.

Finally the servant found it and punished and chastised it severely.

The cat did not come before the shaikh again but sat angrily in a corner.

The shaikh then asked the servant about the cat and the servant told him what had befallen.

The pious shaikh sent for the cat and asked why it had acted thus.

The cat had then been pregnant; it went and brought its three kittens, making three journeys.

It laid them on the ground before the shaikh. It saw a tree there and went sadly off.

Because of its anger with the servant it climbed up the tree and sat down, opening its eyes wide and closing its mouth to any sound.

When the shaikh saw this he was annoyed with the servant; he was filled with surprise and said to himself:

“Without any doubt the cat has an excuse; it had no thought at all of feeding itself.

This act of its was not a breach of good manners, its want was a matter of necessity.

When someone is in a position of constraint, then at once that becomes lawful which was forbidden.

[Ro. 50]

For its young ones a creature less than a spider would snatch food from the jaws of a lion.

What the cat did is no strange matter, for the relationship with children is a wonderful thing.

Until a child is born to thee thou hast no conception of the worry over a child."

The experienced shaikh said to the servant: "This dumb creature has suffered affliction.

Out of anger with thee it is sitting on the branch. If thou ask its pardon it will be friendly towards thee."

The servant took the turban off his head and stood before the cat, asking its pardon.

His words produced no effect; the cat would not even look at him.

Finally the shaikh himself went and addressed the cat; he interceded on behalf of the servant and called the cat down from the branch.

[Ri. 62]

All of a sudden the cat came down from the tree and rolled on the ground at the shaikh's feet.

A cry arose from all present; from every heart a fire rose up like a candle.

They were all of one mind on account of a cat; they were neck-and-neck with one another in offering thanks for that fair outcome.—

If thou have a hundred generations of relations it is not like the relationship with one child.

The only one who is free from [the care of] children is the pure and incomparable God.'

(3) Story of the Christian lad⁵

"There was a wealthy Christian merchant who was a great man in the land.

He had a handsome son such that that Christian lad was the candle of the world.

The violet had its musk-scattering locks from him; the tender rose had its smiling lips from him.

When the veil fell back from his face day would break in the midst of night.

When he twisted the hook of his musky locks he caused all lovers to gird themselves with the *zunnār*.⁶

From the great crookedness which his locks displayed he was never desirous of any righteous thing.

When his eyelashes made war with their javelins he dealt two blows to the two worlds.

When his eyebrow strung its bow, from its arrow the world went in fear of its life.

To scatter sugar from his lips was his mode of life, for his lips were the capital city of sweetness.

The laps of lovers from his smiling lips became like a sea, from the pearls of his teeth.

That life fell ill and died, in short, in the days of youth.

[Ro. 51]

His father out of sorrow for him almost killed himself; he cast out both life and understanding.

Finally after he had washed and purified him, he became a Muslim and then confided him to the dust.

[Ri. 63]

He spoke thus: "Today by my son's death the True Faith has been revealed to me,

For clearly God has no son: He is unencumbered with wife and kith and kin.

For if He had a son how should He consent to my affliction?

I realised that there is nothing but causelessness and that no one is fortunate who is not a believer."

(4) Story of the old man who had a handsome son⁷

'An old man had a son who was like the moon in beauty and whose character and abilities matched the fairness of his face.

His father thought thus of him and had great hopes of him.

In the end he died and burnt his father's soul. Shall I say that he burnt his liver? Nay, he burnt a hundred livers.⁸

Out of his mind the father walked behind his coffin, for he was at once bewildered and stunned.

When he had scattered much dust upon his head in lamentation, he raised it to Heaven with a heart full of sorrow.

He spoke thus: "O Thou who hast no kin, Thou art excused, for Thou hast no son.

Thou art indifferent⁹ to my pain because Thou art unencumbered with a family.

But for Thy infinite self-sufficiency, Thou wouldst have heard the story of the House of Sorrows.¹⁰

Here the son is in the pit or prison; there the father is in the House of Sorrows.

Had he had no kin like Thee there is no doubt that there would have been none like him.”¹¹

For forty years the son had been joined to the father—why did not some effort assist him for a moment?

If there was writing it was only a mistake, and if there was a letter that too was not allowed.’

[*Ri. 64*]

(5) Story of Jacob and Joseph¹²

‘When Jacob and Joseph, who loved each other so much, were at last reunited,

[*Ro. 52*]

Joseph’s father said to him: “O my eye and lamp, when thou didst drain my brain with weeping,

Thou didst set me in the House of Sorrows,¹³ thou didst scatter a whole world of fire upon my soul.

For all those times that thou hast relaxed pleasantly, thou mightest say thou hast never seen me one single day.

Why didst thou treat me thus unjustly? why didst thou never send me a letter?

With thy father so often filled with sorrow for thee, didst thou find it in thy heart to leave him without news of thee?”

Joseph said to the servant: “O strong one, go, bring me those letters.”

The man departed and returned with more than a thousand letters, all identical.

At the head of each of them was written “In the name of God!”, but the remainder of each of them was as white as snow.

He said to his father: “O my lamp to paradise, I wrote all of these to thee.

When I had finished each of them, describing the state of my affairs and my health,

Except the name of God at the top of the letter there remained not a line of writing from beginning to end.

Every letter turned to the colour of snow for it was left without a single line or word.

Gabriel would then arrive from the Almighty and would say: ‘Beware lest thou send him a single letter,

For if thou send that old man a letter the pitch-like writing of the letter will become like milk.’

Now the excuse of thy loving son is that this is why I did not send thee letters.

Although I wished to do so, God did not so wish, and I was able to do nothing in that matter.”—

Although thou acquire the love of a son, yet there will be much grieving in thy heart.

Though thy son be as handsome as Joseph was yet thou wilt have the sorrow of Jacob.

[Ri. 65]

Who shall find a son like Joseph? And yet Jacob suffered great anguish on his account.

No father will ever be such as Jacob was, and yet he suffered greatly without that handsome Joseph.

If thou art a son thy father will be heartbroken because of thee, and if thou art a father thy son will make thee blind.

Thou hast full proof with respect to this paragon of sanctity, O my son, in this one story.’

(6) Story of Joseph and Benjamin¹⁴

‘When Benjamin came before Joseph he at once seated him beside him upon a golden throne.

[Ro. 53]

Joseph was seated wearing a veil, but who can hide a sun?

How should Benjamin ever know that he had before him his beloved brother?

He thought it was a mighty sultan—how should he know that it was his dear brother?

Had he not been the price of dear ones¹⁵ he would never have been the ruler of Egypt.¹⁶

Although Joseph seated him beside him, out of respect Benjamin did not raise his head.

Now Joseph addressed kind words to him, now he enquired after Joseph.

He quietly handed him a letter which told of the suffering of Jacob’s soul.

When Joseph took the letter [he saw] it was addressed to him: he went off with it to his children.

What shall I say? They opened the letter and many times they laid it upon their eyes.¹⁷

From yearning they were all overcome with agitation; cries and shouts rose from amongst them.

They shed many bitter tears of regret, and because of that regret they were filled with a hundred different kinds of bewilderment.

Finally Joseph returned and mounted his throne with a hundred marks of respect.

Some time passed and servants came in; in the middle of the room trays were laid.

Joseph, the beloved king, gave orders that the sons of Jacob should gather together,

But that each should choose another and two brothers sit at each tray.

[*Ri. 66*]

They sat together as he had commanded, but Benjamin was seated in mourning.

As he was left alone, he remembered Joseph and he was sad.

He wept much out of grief for Joseph; he suffered great sorrow on account of his separation from him.

Joseph, the king of the noble, asked him: "Why dost thou weep so bitterly?"

He answered thus: "When I was left alone I shed tears of blood because of the grief I bear,

Because I had, O 'Aziz,¹⁸ a brother of the same father and mother.

Now he has been lost for a long time and no one knows how to find him.

If he too were together with this afflicted one, he would be seated at the same tray as I."

He spoke and had in front of him a tray filled with tears from his eyes.

So many tears did he weep from his eyes that eyes have not seen so many tears.

[*Ro. 54*]

When Joseph saw him weeping so much and saw that his heart was as agitated as his own soul,

He said to him: "Do not weep, young man; accept me for the time as another Joseph,

So that as long as I share thy cup, I may be thy dear one. Who should be better than I to share thy cup?"

The steward then spoke and said: "This cup is full of his tears, O king.

How wilt thou drink these bloody tears? Dost thou think it right to eat thy bread with blood?"

Then said Joseph: "Be silent, for my blood is boiling from this same grief.

My heart, as it were, has obtained from this blood sustenance for the soul. Such a meal may one obtain from drinking blood.

He is an orphan and I shall nourish my soul if I drink the blood of an orphan."

Thus said the sons of Jacob: "He is but young although he is beloved.

He knows nothing of the etiquette of kings—how should he behave properly in thy service?"

[*Ri. 67*]

Therefore we fear for him and there is ground for our fear, for he is a young child before the punctilious king."

Then came the answer of the good Joseph: "A son of Jacob is a proper young man.

Whoever is a son of Jacob, whatever he does is good." Then he said: "Come Benjamin, why is thy face so pale? Speak!"

He said: "Joseph has killed me by his absence and made me grow pale with longing."

Said Joseph: "If thy face is pale, why is thy musk-like hair dishevelled?"

He answered: "Since I have no mother, my hair is in disarray and my life also."

Then Joseph asked: "How didst thou last see thy father, who, they say, has lost his son?"

He replied: "He has been left blind; since there is no Joseph he has been left alone.

A whole world of fire has settled upon his soul: he is seated in the House of Sorrows.

So much bloody water has he shed from his eyes that he is immersed in a whirlpool of blood and water.

When he thinks of Joseph he takes me before him.

How shall I say how bitterly he then weeps in his restlessness?

Were a stone present on such a day it would at once turn to blood without any delay."

When Joseph heard tidings of Jacob his veil at once became moist with tears.

Joseph hid those tears of grief when the Messenger of God came before him

[Ro. 55]

And said: "Show thy face. Why dost thou distress him so? Thou speakest sweetly and yet thy fist is clenched."

When the veil was saturated with tears Joseph drew it down from his face.

And when, in short, Benjamin saw it, it was as though his sweet soul had been separated from him.

[Ri. 68]

His heart began to toss like the ocean; he gave out a cry and fell unconscious.

When with a hundred efforts he had been brought back to consciousness Joseph enquired as follows: "O well-disposed one,

What befell thee that thou didst fall unconscious; that thou didst grow faint and become agitated?"

He answered: "I know what it is with thee. It is as though thou wert Joseph and yet thou art the ruler of Egypt.

I have chosen thee in place of Joseph; it is as though I had seen thee before.

By God, thou art like Joseph. If thou art indeed he, why dost thou torment me so?

I, who am all alone, have not the strength to support it. I do not know how things are; thou knowest—tell me.”—

Whoever regards this tale of mine as a [mere] fable, Wisdom considers herself to be a stranger to him.

Thou hast behind the curtain of thy soul an acquaintance¹⁹ with whom thou once did share an adventure.

If thou recognisest him again for a single moment thou wilt have gained the lead over the whole of mankind.

And if thy heart is a stranger to him, then surely thou wilt be in like case with me.

If thy heart hath not this acquaintance with him, then light will be lacking in all thy works.

He that has still the scent of that acquaintance is thereby accustomed to the nearness of God.

Since he is with God, God will never withhold the sun from that shadow.’²⁰

(7) Story of the young sinner and the angels of hell that were in charge of him

‘I have read that on the Day of Judgment a young man will come forth and ask God for pardon.

His sins are exceeding many but the Bounteous Judge is on his side.

The angels hurry him in front of them in order to deliver him up to the torments of hell.

All at once a voice comes from the Court of God [saying]: “Why are you dragging him in this way?”

[*Ri.* 69]

They reply: “We are hurrying off with him in order to cast him into hell.”

The voice comes again but speaking a riddle: “We two are together, strange to say.

[*Ro.* 56]

This you must not hear that we two shall be together.”

The angels have never heard such words; they have never witnessed such generosity.

In awe they are all silent; they tremble and then become unconscious.

The voice comes to the young man: “O distressed one, why dost thou stay? Come, flee from them.”

The young man says: “O God, in such a place as this valley, which has

neither beginning nor end,

Whither can I go to escape judgment, for here there is nowhere to escape to?"

The voice comes: "O thou who art drunk indeed, come, flee to Us, thou shalt escape from everything."

The young man says: "I dare not do this, for I have no coin but my helplessness,

Unless Thou shouldst exercise Thy grace and admit me behind the curtain of secrets!"

God covers him in His generosity and hides him from the people of the Resurrection.

He brings him to the blissful place of secrets; He brings him to the sanctum where God is seen.

When the angels recover consciousness they cannot see the young man on the road.

They seek him everywhere but cannot find him; they hurry briskly in every direction.

They say to God: "Whither is our prisoner gone? Is he lost in the world of eternity?"

We have searched through heaven and earth for him and have given up hope of finding him.

Dost Thou know, O God, whither he has departed? If Thou wilt tell us not, our souls will have departed."

There came a voice saying: "This is an act of Our wisdom; he is behind the curtain of Our sanctity.

Since he has found rest with Us you have nothing more to do with him.
[Ri. 70]

Now he knows and We know eternally, and you must not interfere."—

Since [God's] kindness has given succour from Eternity past, how then can strangers intervene?

But first to the Prophet as a guide there appears a sun of kindness.

If kindness chooses thee out all thy failings will become virtues.

He shows His face to thee so that thou mayst have nothing to do but to gaze upon it.'

(8) Story of the young man possessed of the knowledge of God entering paradise and meeting with the Almighty²¹

'It is thus related in the Traditions that when Judgment Day comes round and all the heartburning that shall ensue.

[Ro. 57]

There will enter amongst that throng a young man finely decked out

surrounded by a thousand men with whips.

They will clear the way for him and everyone will give way to him.

To the guardian there will then come these words from the Almighty:
“Lodge him in such-and-such a palace.”

They will lodge him blissfully in that palace, and all the houris will utter cries of delight at seeing him.

There will be windows to that goodly palace, a thousand or two thousand on every side for him.

From every window the young man will look straight out and behold his God there.

A thousand doors will open all the time and crowds will enter by every door.

But in every crowd of men and women he will see only his God.—

Both words have the wish for union but it is nothing but vain desire.

Not everyone is reached with a waft of that scent; not every polo-stick strikes a ball from that direction.

The heart must both fear and burn for God; the tongue must enquire after and fear the road to Him.

If this be thy practice, despite thy thou-ness, that thou fearest and enquirest always,

[*Ri. 71*]

Thy whole being will be occupied with this idea, the whole town of thy heart will adopt this practice,

So that for a moment it may be possible to smell the scent thereof, but it can be smelt only with the nostrils of the soul.

Thou wilt live a real life only when thy soul is in the presence of the Beloved

And if thy life be outside this reckoning, with every breath there will be a hundred curtains to thy reckoning.’

(9) Story of the dervish who asked Majnūn how old he was²²

‘A certain dervish asked Majnūn: “Son, how old art thou now?”

That distraught one answered: “My age is a thousand and forty years.”

The dervish said: “What sayest thou, O thoughtless one? Art thou become still madder, O ignoramus?”

Majnūn replied: “There was once a supreme moment when Lailā showed me her face.

I have lived forty years, and all of this is loss, but that moment is equal to a thousand years.

Since during those forty years I was by myself I was poor in the coin of my life.

But that one moment was equal to a thousand years, for together with Lailā I had time without measure.”—

[Ro. 58]

There thousands of years are but a moment, nay they are less than a moment *there*.

When both worlds attain to the endless Being, non-existence remains their province.

See, O friend, what a Being this is, before which each individual atom prostrates itself!

That is a Being which became neither more nor less; in it all things will cease to exist.

How lofty a Being in which all these things will vanish with feelings of Joy!

When a man becomes non-existent *there*, all his loss becomes profit *there*.

If the whole world stretch out their hands not one will reach the hem of his garment.

Since this person is not nor the hem of his garment, who shall ever lay hold thereof?²³

[Ri. 72]

(10) Story of the madman who had a fever²⁴

‘Someone asked a madman who had a fever: “Does the fever grip thee?” The madman was surprised.

He answered: “If I die, whom will the fever be gripping then?”’

Discourse IV

The son said: 'My heart is left dismayed, for it is left without the princess of the peris.

Since that maiden exists and is lovely, tell me at least about her,

For without having seen her I burn like a candle because of separation from her; my soul is at my lips and I am filled with longing for her.'

His father told him this story; he revealed a bride from behind the curtain of secrets.

(1) Story of Sarpātak¹ the Indian²

'In India a certain man had a son whose understanding was great though his years were few.

[Ro. 59]

He had studied much in every science and on this account was superior to all.

Though he was a master of every science, yet it was the science of astrology that pleased him most.

In that place [i.e. in books on astrology] there was mention of the King of China, as also of the beauty of his daughter.

All at once he was bewitched by that heart-ravisher, for it is easy to fall in love with a peri.

In a distant town there was a sage who was famous for his skill in medicine and astrology.

He would admit no one to his house; he never had a confidant there.

He sat alone that no one else might know his science, only he alone.

The boy said to his father: "Take me one day to that heart-illuminating sage.

[Ri. 73]

For they say he is visited by the king of the peris and his daughter.

My heart desires to see him, for it may be that there I shall see the face of the Loved One.

For I will not die like a worthless worldling before I am in possession of every branch of knowledge."

His father said: "This man has neither wife nor child, but many wish to visit him.

But he admits no one, though many, like thee, wish to attend on him.

For he fears, if anyone gains access to him, he will become conversant with his wisdom and knowledge."

The son said: "Take me there in secret, for I know of a trick that will overcome this difficulty."

In short, father and son set out on the road, and the son told the father the the device he had in mind.

"Go," he said, "to that Indian sage, dismiss all malice from thy heart and show a friendly mien.

Say to him: 'I have a deaf and dumb son; I have no wealth and am a poor man.

For the sake of thy reward in the Hereafter take him from me; lift this heavy load off my shoulders,

So that for a time in thy service he may carry out tasks as thou commandest,

Now kindling a fire, now fetching water, now respectfully preparing thy bed.

If thou goest out he will keep the door shut; he will for ever be performing a hundred services for thee.

He is clever in the extreme but deaf and dumb. Do not cause me to despair of all things.

Such a person, if it is proved that he is such, his existence is tantamount to non-existence.'"

The father came before the sage and spoke long with him; in the end he accepted the boy.

The sage at once carried out a test upon him to find out whether he was really deaf and dumb.

He gave him a sleeping draught, and when the boy took it he at once lay down.

[Ro. 61]

The master went out of the door for some medical employment, and the boy leapt up and stood on his feet.

[Ri. 75]

He realised that this was a test intended to make him drunk with sleep.

He ran like the wind around the house whilst his master was employed with his work.

The reason why he ran with such speed was lest the drug should put him to sleep.

When his master returned and closed the door, the boy was lying there pretending to be asleep,

Making the noises of one asleep and showing signs neither of intoxication nor of agitation.

The master approached, sat down beside him and drove a bodkin deep into his leg.

The boy sprang up and then fell down, making such moans as dumb people do.

When these sounds came forth from his mouth, his tongue itself bore witness to his dumbness.

In the midst of these moans his master asked him: "Boy, wilt thou not say what happened to thee?"

The boy of course did not answer him; his cleverness produced the right course of action.

When his cunning master had carried out that test, he was convinced that the boy was both deaf and dumb.³

What more shall I say? Ten years passed by, and the boy remained in that house following his plan.

If his master went out he would study his books from beginning to end.

And if he stayed at home he would speak a great deal about every science, and the boy would listen.

He would commit these words to memory and would write them down when he was alone in the house.

He became so skilled in every science that he was no longer dependent on his master.

There was a locked chest which his master used to conceal behind a curtain.

He would not remove the seal nor open it; the eye of no one fell upon it.

The boy used to say to himself: "It is clear that what I seek is in that chest."

[*Ri. 75*]

But he had not the courage to open it, and so it was necessary for him to bide his time.

It so happened that the daughter of the king⁴ of that town fell ill and someone came to the illustrious master to say:

"There is something in this princess's head that has made her take to her bed.

It moves at times like an animal, and no one has any knowledge about it.

If the master can discover what it is, all will be well; otherwise she will perish wretchedly this very day."

The boy knew nothing of that disease. When his master set out,

He followed throwing a woman's garment around him so that he might have access to this strange sight.

[*Ro. 61*]

In short, when the master came into the presence of the princess, the boy took his stand in a high place.

In the skin of the princess's head was a swelling and in the swelling was an animal.

He cut off all her hair and made an incision in the skin; he found moving in it a creature like a crab.

It buried its claws deeper into the skin and the sage straightway produced an instrument

In order to extract it from the skin in case it might be removed with iron.

As the iron penetrated deeper, so the creature buried its claws deeper in the skin.

Because of the wound inflicted by its claws the princess cried out because of the pain in her forehead.

From above the apprentice observed all of this; his patience was finally exhausted.

He opened his mouth and said: "O master of all the world, with iron thou art but tightening the bond.

But if hot iron touches its back it will withdraw all its claws from her head."⁵

When the master became aware of the secret of the matter, out of chagrin he despatched his soul to the other world.⁶

When he had died they summoned that boy and with honour set him in his place.

[Ri. 76]

By means of cautery he removed that animal and prepared a salve from the proper ingredients.

When the princess recovered from her affliction she gave him the Indian name of Sarpātak.⁷

Much gold she gave him and sent him a robe of honour; she bestowed upon him the rank and belongings of his master.

The boy went and opened the chest, and in it he saw the description of his Beloved

In a book concerned with the science of astrology; he read it all and became the greatest master in the whole clime.⁸

In the end, from longing for that delighter of hearts, he had not patience for one hour, day or night.

In the end he drew a line and sat in the middle of it; and lines went out from it in every direction.

He recited an incantation, and after forty days the lovely peri princess appeared,

A beauty in describing whom the speaker is dumb—what do I say? To describe her is impossible.

When Sarpātak looked at her from head to toe, he saw that she was placed inside his own bosom.

He marvelled at this and said: "How, O fair one, hast thou taken abode within me?"

The lovely beauty answered: "I have been with thee since the first day. I am thy carnal soul;⁹ thou art seeking thyself—why dost not thou make thy understanding see?

If thou wilt only see, thou art the whole world; from without and within thou art its intimate."

The sage said to her: "It is known regarding the soul that that base thing is a serpent or a dog or a swine.

[*Ro.* 62]

Thou art the fairest thing on earth or in heaven; with such beauty thou resemblest no man's soul."

The peri said to him: "If I am *ammāra*,¹⁰ I am a hundred times worse than a swine or a dog.

But when I become *mutma'inna*, Heaven forbid that any man should think thus!

When I have become *mutma'inna*, the cry of 'Return to thy Lord!'¹¹ comes from the Court.

Now I am the soul, O peerless one. If I follow a devil,

The faithful will call me *ammāra*, unless my devil becomes a Muslim."—

[*Ri.* 77]

If a devil becomes a Muslim here, all will be well here.

So much did that seeker toil until his soul became master of his self.

Therefore whoever seeks the secret of his soul from the object of his desires must endure much toil along that road.

Now, O son, thou art that which thou seekest. All is in thee, but thou art feeble in thy efforts.

If thou workest manfully at the work of God, thou shalt be all and thou shalt be a fellow inmate of the house.

Thou art suddenly lost without thyself, for thou seekest thyself along this road.

Thou art in love with thyself; go then to thyself; do not go out on to the plain, come home.

From that love of home stems a pure faith, for the loved one is within a pure soul.'

(2) Story of the vizier who had a handsome son¹²

'A vizier had a beauteous son, for love of whom the moon was turned upside down.

His beauty had put the seal on the captivation of hearts; his lips had tasted the pure water of Kauthar.¹³

In beauty he was unique like his arched eyebrows;¹⁴ with his eyes he waylaid lovers like a highway robber.

A Šūfī was helpless with love of him; he became I know not how, as much as it is possible to become.

He in no way dared to reveal the secret of his love.

So sorely did love always consume him that he was always burning from head to foot.

Having no fellow-sufferer, no friend to speak to, he had no one to share his sorrow with him.

He kept that secret concealed inside his heart until from loss of heart he could do so no longer.

His eyes rained blood like rain until, all of a sudden, they both became blind.

When it became clear to him that he was blind every pain was increased a thousandfold.

Finally his secret became known and a crowd of people came to gaze on him.

When his eye grew dim and his face pale, the people's hearts were pained with his pain.

The great men and the emirs that were there all conceived the wish to see him.

The king's vizier was returning from a journey; his son came with him to that place.

He had heard about the condition of that enamoured man; he dismounted in front of all the people.

He had his son sit in comfort, freely and easily, beside himself in front of that dervish.

If the son was the pupil of his father's eye, yet the lover's case was otherwise,

For the lover's eye had departed on his account, but how should the father's eye have departed?

The vizier was well content and felt no anger that the blind eye should receive a pupil.

He said to the helpless blind man: "If thy eye departed because of this moonlike face,

Behold, the boy is sitting before thee—what more dost thou wish, O thou whose eyes are closed?"

When the lover heard these words he sprang up, let out a cry and lost all control.

So did that hard-trying one weep as a cloud does not weep with its many eyes.

The vizier said to him: "O forgetful one, the boy is with thee—why dost thou weep so bitterly?"

The sorrowful blind man opened his mouth and said: "A stone would weep blood on account of my pain.

A whole lifetime had passed over me waiting for this boy to come before me for a single moment.

Now that this moon-faced delight of lovers has come I must look for my eyes throughout the world.

If before now it was he that I was seeking I am now seeking my own eyes.

If I only can discover my eyes I will purchase his beauty with my life.

If I have no eyes what shall I do, O peerless Beloved?

[*Ri.* 79]

If the whole world be the object of adoration, when one has no eyes, to what purpose is it?

I need eyes, not a beloved, for to the blind man Creator and Created are all one."—

The whole world is beauty upon beauty, but the blind man says: "That is impossible."

If thou becomest a seer of this road thou wilt become aware of thy own beauty.

If thy heart comes forth pure from this prison, a hundred gardens will come out of every particle.

Every atom of thy saline dust will make the moon and the sun thy chaste wives.

[*Ro.* 64]

Thy body is blind, but how cannot thy soul see that every atom is a lord of the conjunction?

Since the two worlds spring from one essence, they spring also from every atom.

Know of a certainty that wherever there is a thorn beneath it is a beautiful paradise.

But if it appears from behind the veil, those blind-eyed ones are wounded by the sight.'

(3) Story of the king who fled before an army¹⁵

'An army fell upon a certain town and a king fled therefrom in secret.

He went to another town and changed his clothing; neither nobles nor commoners recognised him.

One of his confidants saw him, he said: "Why art thou like a beggar?

Tell them at least that thou art the king. Why dost thou sit in lowliness and distress?"

The king said to him: "Do not say 'Show thyself', for if I tell them [who I am] they will tear me to pieces."—

Whoever has not the eye for the Sultan cannot go to the Sultan.

If without this eye thou seek to be near the King, thou will lie in thy own life's blood.'

[Ro. 80]

(4) Story of the prince of whom an officer was enamoured¹⁶

'There was once a prince like a piece of the moon, out of jealousy for whom the sun became a vagrant.

If the sun saw his face it would tremble like an epileptic before the new moon.

Since his forehead was a silver tablet on it was written *jīm* and *mīm* with musk.¹⁷

When the *jīm* and *mīm* twisted and curled with the *jīm* and *mīm* he would capture the kingdom of Jam.¹⁸

With his eyebrows he acted as chamberlain¹⁹ to the moon, with his eyelashes he hunted now the heart and now the liver.

When Temptation beheld the bay horse of his eyes it would prepare to hunt and to ride.

What a bay it was and what a hunt! A good rider indeed the bay had and the hunt brought good game.

His lips were both honey and sugar, but each of these was sweeter than those.

[Ro. 65]

When the bee girded its lions for that honey, the sugar-cane did likewise for that sugar.²⁰

Two rows he had with thirty corals²¹ as companions shining through his cornelians²² like thirty pearls.

From the zenith of the world the stars would gaze down from the seventh heaven.

Whoever beheld his face, if he had a life, he would sacrifice it before him.

A certain officer became enamoured of that moon-like one, his heart was turned upside down and his understanding led astray.

He was filled with pain since he had no cure, for he had not a soul worthy of that loved one.

Much was he agitated with that pain, for no one ever became aware of that man.

So did that victim of tyranny bleed as never did any sufferer from grief.

Now of the kings who bore that king ill-will there appeared a certain enemy.

[Ri. 81]

The king dispatched his son against that enemy; he dispatched that moon-like one in mail like a fish.

The son departed with a great army leading the vanguard; all were thirsty, heaven-like, for [the enemy's] heart's blood.

As soon as the news reached that officer, I will not say that he rose on his feet, but he rose on his head.

He rejoiced as much at the wound of war as a sorrowful man at the sound of merrymaking.

He obtained a horse and set off, but he set off equipped with mail and caparisons.

In the midst of that prince's army his body rode but his soul went on foot.

He would gaze stealthily upon the prince's face; all the time he would scatter glances upon him from his eyes.

How great a pleasure is such a life when thou lookest in secret upon the face of the Beloved!

When one can see the face of the Beloved by stealth one can see it with the soul and with the eyes.

To be brief, when the armies came together and the two lines broke against each other in one charge,

The earth was darkened from [the men of] both lands and the heavens ceased to be bright from the dust raised by the armies.

In short, because of the perverse heavens such a prince was taken prisoner.

The army fled and the prince was at a loss: of so many people only the officer and the prince were left.

No one had captured that officer, he had cast himself into these toils.

The two of them were taken away into a cell—union for one and separation for the other.

Bonds were put upon the legs of those two; they were imprisoned together in one place.

[Ro. 66]

Finally the prince asked the officer: "How then didst come into the fighting?"

I know nothing about thee. From what tribe art thou? Or art thou an intruder in my army?

That forlorn officer spoke: "I am an admirer of the king of the world.

It has been my wish for a long time that the king might perhaps admit me into his service,

When suddenly the king set out on this campaign I too set out on the road

[Ri. 82]

For I said: 'In the campaign I shall fight hard, and perhaps Fortune will aid me before the king,'

So that I may win bread and fame from thee and all my life may obtain

some rank from thee.”

When the prince heard these words from him, he was freed from grief and rejoiced because of him.

That proud one was full of love towards him, and he himself had loved him for a long time.

From joy the officer's heart was such that thou wouldst have said his cash in hand was a hundred worlds.

Though that head-turned one was in chains he manfully did not cast himself down.

Night and day he attended upon that prince; every moment he rendered him greater service.

All night he would massage his legs until morning; all day that delighter of hearts would speak to him.

So free of speech did he become with that jessamine-scented one that it is not for the story-teller to speak thereof.

That heartsick one used to pray every day: “O Lord continue all this misfortune and grief,

In order that there may be no separation, and do not free us from this prison.

Since this prison is a paradise to me I would not sell one brick of it for a hundred gardens.”

When the king learnt of the prince's plight, the world became darkened to him without the face of that moon-like one.

When such a captivator of hearts is in captivity, how much patience can a father have?

When so great a boulder fell on the road, a long war was fought between those two kings.

When a treaty was concluded and peace appeared, they came to terms with each other.

It was agreed that that wise king should give his daughter to that prince in chains.

That king went to the prince and gave him his moonlike daughter.

He summoned him and that officer also and said: “We have no further cause for war.”

He showed them both such kindness as neither I can describe nor thou.

Then he so disposed of his daughter's affairs that he dispatched ten times the treasure of Qārūn²³ along with her.

[*Ri.* 83]

[*Ro.* 67]

When the prince came back to his own town, his confidant having helped him from bonds and imprisonment,

That world-illuminating one, amongst his own people, held wedding celebrations for forty days and nights.

He held in his embraces a ravisher of hearts and in that time no one ever saw him.

The officer's heart was so affected all the time that that half-dead one was in fear of death.

Not for a single moment did he have patience or repose; the skirt of his coat became filled with his blood.

During those forty days and forty nights he was, in his fever and burning, like a candle, that is without food or sleep.

So much did he welter in his blood because of jealousy that every hour he turned a different colour.

When someone has grown accustomed to being alone with such a loved one, will not his soul burn when such a thing happens?

After forty days the fortunate prince ascended the throne, one morning, with his crown on his head.

The sword-bearers proudly took their stand, each having drawn his head-felling sword.

The pages were drawn up like eyelashes, all blackhearted and rebellious like the eye.

And if thou enquirest about the viziers, they were all seated on stools like that of the empyrean.²⁴

The heart of that world-illuminating prince became concerned that day with that officer.

He summoned him before him. When he entered, he greeted him and straightway stumbled.

He fell to the ground and consciousness departed from him; from his throat there issued a cry without his volition.

When, thus fallen to the ground, he had come to himself again, that pure prince asked him:

"O officer, what ails thee that thou art in such mournful case and thy body is like a reed?

Thou has become as though some illness had befallen thee. Hast thou suffered some affliction whilst thou wert without me?"

The officer spoke: "O king, in that prison I was not aware of thee.

[*Ri. 84*]

When I had borne separation from thee for forty days I saw thee today after forty days.

I saw thee in the midst of hustle and bustle, of confusion and uproar from east to west.

Like that I had been accustomed to thee before we were separated, like that I was, like this I cannot endure.

If thou appeared in that garment, I could love thee once again.

If thou remain in these robes in which thou art amidst this regal splendour,

How shall this poor agitated soul find the strength to embrace this majesty?"

So he spoke. The appointed time had come and with a hundred lamentations his pure soul ascended to heaven.—

If thou have a manly ambition thou shalt have the king of the horizons as thy room-mate.

[Ro. 68]

And if thou be draggle-tailed like that officer, because of thy weakness thy foot will soon stumble over a stone.

If thou travel the road, O road-seeing friend, regard everything as being the King's robes.

For if [thou knowest that] the King has thousands of robes thou wilt not find thyself in the throng of the restless.

Do not be deceived but know of a certainty, like a true man, that the King is always changing his robes.

If the world is full of white and black, know that these are the King's robes.

The two worlds are like a single robe, see them as one, for squinting is the polytheism of the Magians.

The King has many robes in his wardrobe—do not look at the robes, look only at the King.²⁵

For whoever knows only of the outward will remain for ever excluded from the inward.

Those whose hearts are alive with God see with the eyes of the world to come.

If thou too have such an eye thou wilt see everything with the eyes of the world to come.

For thy outward eye, because of the picture of the rabble, does not concern itself in the least with the Painter.

But it is the practice of the Painter to be always decking out His own picture.

Since His face has beauty without measure, His brightness is a veil to his beauty,

[Ri. 85]

For although the beauty of the sun is manifest, yet the very light of its face holds back the viewer.

Though a whole world stand with drawn sword, yet those with eyes to see will find their way to the Sultan.

What concern has thou with swords and the soldiers' "Give way!"? Look only at the King.

Everything thou seest behind and before thou must pass it over and thyself too,

In order that when the picture rises before thee the Supreme Painter may admit thee to His presence.'

(5) Story of the old firewood seller and Sultan Maḥmūd²⁶

'Maḥmūd, accompanied by fifty horsemen, was returning along the road from a hunting expedition.

They pitched a tent upon the road and put the game upon the fire.

The king saw a feeble old man upon the road whose burden was a heavy bundle of firewood.

Out of pity Maḥmūd went up to him and said "How much for this bundle of wood?"

That wandering old man did not realise that that purchaser of wood was Maḥmūd.

The old man spoke: "O emir, I will sell it for two grains; give two grains and take it."

[*Ro. 69*]

The king had a purse in which were a hundred dinars weight of un-minted gold, each piece more than two grains.

He opened it and sitting in front of the old man put a piece in his hand.

He said to him: "This is two grains, old man, if thou wish to accept it from me and take it."

He said: "Perhaps this is more than two grains. There are no scales here—how can it be weighed?"

Maḥmūd put another piece in his hand and said: "See if this is two grains."

He replied: "It is more. I can tell from experience without weighing."

Maḥmūd gave him another and said: "How is that?" He said: "This one too is more."

In the same way Maḥmūd gave him piece after piece, but each time he knew without a doubt that it was more.

[*Ri. 86*]

When Maḥmūd had been through the whole purse, he became weary of the matter and threw it to the old man,

Saying, "Put the gold in the purse, for this is his purse; take it to the town, for there are scales there.

Take two grains and deliver the remainder quickly into the hands of the Sultan's chamberlain."

The old man took the gold from the king, and the king drove his horse on.

When the next day the king ascended the throne, that luckless old man came to court.

When he saw the king his heart fell into his boots, from dread his limbs began to tremble.

He realised that the king was his mirror, that same king was his acquaintance of the day before.

When the king saw him, he said, "Admit him, set a seat for him in the front row."

He sat down and the king said: "What hast thou done, old man? Tell me all."

He answered: "O heart-illuminating king, last night I lay hungry in bed till morning."

The king asked "Why?" He said: "On that road thou didst not then conclude a sale with me.

Thou thoughtest me a rich man like thyself seeing that thou didst leave me hungry last night."

The king said to him: "Go keep that gold, for it is all thine."

The old man spoke and said: "O king, since thou art giving me all that gold at once,

Why couldst thou not give it to me yesterday? Why didst thou place it in my hand one piece at a time?"

The king said to him: "As thou didst call me emir and didst not know that I was Sultan, the wish came into my heart that thou shouldst recognise me as the king of the world.

Since thou hast become aware of my kingship, thou art become king in respect to all thy needs."—

O loved one, thou art the woodcutter in this road and that king is the light of God.

[Ro. 70]

Thou takest every breath of thy life from God just as those pieces of gold.

When tomorrow thou receivest thy eternal life, thou wilt receive that purse before the throne of God.

Thousands of ages of that precious life are not a moment—know this if thou be not foolish.

Since there is no prospect that that moment will pass away, thousands of ages are not even a single hair.

If thou once grow weary there, thou shalt taste the taste of eternal life,

And if thou have the bonds of Time upon thy feet, thou art a thing of Time and shalt die where thou art.'

Discourse V

The second son came to his father and said: 'I wish to bore pearls in magic.

From all the world what my heart craves is magic. If I become a master of magic,

I shall visit every land, I shall live joyously on every shore.

Now I shall be at peace, now at war; east to west will be my parade ground.

Now I shall make myself a bird, now I shall hold up my head erect as a man.

Now I shall haunt the mountains like a panther, now I shall scour the seas like a crocodile.

I shall see all the beautiful ones; I shall sit with each of them behind the curtain.

I shall find my way to whatever I need; I shall exercise my authority from the Fish to the Moon.

Think well of the power I shall wield. Tell me, who shall be better off than I?'

Father's reply

His father said to him: 'The Devil has overcome thee, and therefore it is that thy heart is desirous of magic,

For if this were not the work of the Devil upon thee, this wish would not be in thy heart.

[*Ri. 88*]

If thou forsake this Devil thou shalt be saved, otherwise thou art a luckless worshipper of Satan.

Hast thou then no knowledge of God that thou wouldst do the work of the Devil and naught else?

[*Ro. 71*]

For God's sake thou wilt not give a loaf to a beggar; for thy pleasures thou keepest a hundred doors open.

Thou art generous in hypocrisy and pleasure, but to God thou art a denizen of hell.'

(1) Story of Shibli and the baker²

"There was in a certain place a baker who had heard tell of Shibli.

Many a tale he had heard tell about him but had not seen his living face.

Often he had sat in yearning for him, for he was filled with love for him.

He did not love him from having seen him, but he loved him from hearsay.

One day at noon Shibli entered his shop, hot of face after a long journey.

He went up to that baker and before he knew he picked up a loaf in his shop.

The baker snatched that bread from his hand saying, "I will give thee no bread, thou beggar."

He did not give him the bread and Shibli passed on. Someone informed that baker regarding him

That he was Shibli and said, "If thou hold him so dear, why dost thou withhold from him a single loaf?"

The baker ran all the way to the desert, biting the back of his hand because of that embarrassment.

With a hundred lamentations he fell at Shibli's feet, and threw himself down again and again.

Many excuses he made and showed him honour saying "How shall I make it good again?"

When Shibli saw him lying in the road he said: "If thou wish that fault to be removed,

Go tomorrow and prepare a reception for me, proclaim straightway an assembly."

The baker went off at once and decked out a very splendid mansion.

[*Ri. 89*]

He prepared a reception of such elegance that he expended a hundred dinars of gold upon it.

He went to such expense as no one else could have been capable of.

He told many persons of every sort that Shibli was coming to visit him.

Finally, they all sat at table, and after Shibli had offered up a prayer they departed.

There was an honoured guest, a man of tortured mind, who then asked a question of Shibli,

Saying, "I cannot distinguish good from evil. Tell me who is destined for hell and who for Paradise."

[*Ro. 72*]

Shibli thus replied to that fellow guest: "If thou wouldst see someone destined for hell,

Look at our host who gave a reception on account of my fame.

For God's sake he would not give a loaf of bread but for my sake he gave

a hundred dinars.

For Shibli's sake he incurred a hundred debts; to God he will not give a loaf of bread till Judgment Day.

For had he given a single loaf ungrudgingly, he would be destined not for hell but for Paradise.

Now if thou wouldst see someone destined for hell, look, blacken all his water and bread."—

If thou wouldst be a denizen of hell, do thus to be accounted a generous man.

How canst thou sincerely worship God? Thou art only a dog-worshipper.

Thou wilt keep vigil for a dog, but not for God. Behold, thou art an infidel.'

(2) Story of the devout man in a mosque and a dog³

'One night a good man, who had experienced little suffering in religion, entered a mosque.

That devout man had resolved to do nothing but pray until morning.

When night grew dark, a sound arose as though someone had entered the mosque.

[*Ri. 90*]

That praying one thought that this was someone perfect in the art of praying.

He said to himself: "Such a person will come to such a place only for the worship of God.

This good man will notice me; he will hear my prayer and devotion."

All night long until daybreak he engaged in devotion; he did not rest from worship even for a moment.

He prayed and lamented much; now he vowed to sin no more, now he asked for forgiveness.

He performed the proper rites and ceremonies; he made a good show of himself.

When the true dawn rose out of the East and light therefrom entered the mosque,

That man furtively opened his eyes; there was a dog asleep in the mosque.

From confusion blood fell into his soul; like rain tears fell upon his eyelashes.

So did his heart burn upon the fire of shame that his tongue and palate burnt from the sighs of his heart.

He spoke and said: "O man without manners, tonight through this dog

God has taught thee manners.

[Ro. 73]

All night didst thou labour for the sake of a dog; didst thou in this way keep awake a whole night for God?

Never did I see thee worship sincerely a whole night for the sake of God alone.

Many a dog is better than thou, O hypocrite. See where a dog is and where thou art.

From shamelessness thou hast become immersed in hypocrisy—hast thou then no shame before God?

When the curtain finally falls before thee, what will thou say in the end to thy God?

Now that I have seen my degree I have lost all hope for my cause.

I shall achieve no good work in this world and, if I do, it will be fit only for dogs.”—

Why wouldst thou be the companion of the Devil, a madman because of thy dog-like nature?

Flee from this evil nest of devils and flee from this prison filled with madmen.

What wouldst thou of these followers of Dajjāl?⁴ What seekest thou of these pretended Mahdis?⁵

[Ri. 91]

Since enmity comes to thee from thy friends, so the thistle in thy path is from the garden.

There are many Dajjāls with the faces of Mahdis who, like Dajjāl, are drunk with pride.

How long wilt thou follow the Dajjāl of magic? Is it not time at last that thou shouldst take advice?

If in the end an imperfect man follows Dajjāl for seven paces, there is a tradition of the Knower of Secrets that he cannot escape from him again for a single moment.

He becomes his disciple in every way; he remains eternally in the host of Dajjāl.

So is everyone who for seven paces, contrary to the faith, follows Dajjāl.

Whoever for seventy years in fraud and deceit places his steps (O strange!) in the steps of Iblis,

As his Dajjāl is Iblis—I do not know what his condition will be.

Since thy Dajjāls are the deceitful Devil, the world and thy tyrannous soul,

How should a man fare well even for a moment with all these arrogant Dajjāls?

How many a Mahdi-hearted one of spotless conduct has become the prisoner of this Dajjāl of the world!

How much blood has this Dajjāl shed, not for one day but for tens of thousands of years!’

(3) Jesus’ disputation with the world⁶

‘The pure Messiah, who was raised above the world, much desired to see it.

[Ro. 74]

He was walking one day bathed in light, when he saw in the distance upon the road an old woman.

Her hair had turned white, her back was bent and all her teeth had fallen out.

Her eyes were blue and her face like pitch; her whole body exhaled the stench of filth.

On her breast she wore a hundred-coloured robe; she had a heart full of spite and a crooked waist.

[Ri. 92]

One hand was dyed with a hundred colours, the other was always stained with blood.

On every hair was the beak of an eagle; a veil was drawn over her face.

When Jesus saw her, he said: “Old woman, tell me who thou art, thou ugly proud one.”

She answered: “Since thou art very righteous, I am that wish which thou madest.”

The Messiah said to her: “Art thou the vile world?” “I am,” she said. “What art thou?”

The Messiah said to her: “Since thou wearest a veil, why hast thou put on this many-coloured robe?”

She answered: “I wear a veil in order that no one may ever see me plainly.

For if men should see me ugly as I am, how should they sit with me even for a moment?

I have put on this many-coloured robe because with this I have led a whole world of people astray.

When they see my robe is of many colours they all, against their will, choose my love.”

The Messiah said to her: “O prison of vileness, why hast thou one hand stained with blood?”

She answered: “O peerless leader, it is because of the many husbands I have killed in the world.”

The Messiah said to her: “Why then, O drunken old woman, hast thou put dye on thy hand?”

She answered: "When I seduce my husbands, I need much dye in order to adorn myself."

The Messiah said to her: "When thou didst kill the people of the world, didst thou never have compassion on them?"

She answered: "What do I know of compassion? This only I know, that I shed the blood of all."

The Messiah said to her: "O luckless woman, hast thou not a little pity for them?"

She answered: "I have heard of pity, but I have never felt pity for anybody."

I wander all the time around the world in order that a whole world of people may fall into my snare.

I have clutched at every one's throat, I have become the teacher of my disciples."

[*Ri. 93*]

Jesus was amazed at her and said: "I have grown weary of such a partner."

[*Ro. 75*]

Look at these witless fools who seek this vagrant beldame.

They do not take warning from this whore and make their capital out of resignation to God's will.

Alas for mankind: they have not perceived the inner meaning, for religion is lost to them and they have not experienced the world."

When that pure and innocent one had spoken a few words he averted his face from the vile world.—

This deceitful world is like carrion, and thou, like a dog, art concerned with carrion.

Since thou art in the bonds of a dog and of carrion thou art a hundred times worse than either.

If this dog does not become sated with carrion, thou art never sated with this dog.

If thou place it in bonds thou shalt have escaped from it, otherwise thou shalt be plagued by it day and night.'

(4) Story of the monk and Shaikh Abu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī⁷

'A monk built a goodly hermitage, closing the door and letting in a window.

There he sat for a considerable time busily employed, he performed many acts of mortification.

Abu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī came that way upon a journey; he suddenly walked around that hermitage.

He called many times from every side of it, but the monk did not come out to him.

Finally after much shouting on his part the monk thrust his head out from above.

He said to him: "O busybody, why dost thou disturb me thus in my distress?"

What wilt thou of me? Tell me truthfully." The shaikh said to the monk: "This is my request,

That thou shouldst inform me out of thy kindness how thou art employed in this place."

The monk spoke and said: "O saint, what work do I do? Desist from such talk!

[*Rt.* 94]

I saw in myself a savage dog running madly about the town.

I have imprisoned him thus; I have closed the door on him and kept it closed.

For he used often to attack the people of the world. Such is my employment in this hermitage.

I have forsaken wife and child and have locked up a dog in a prison.

Do thou also lock up thy dog lest it be always molesting the distraught."—

Lock up thy dog—how much more anger?—lest tomorrow thou be changed into a dog.

Thus said the Prophet to a questioner: "The changing of my nation into dogs takes place only in the heart."

[*Ro.* 76]

Thy heart is the victim of thy wicked carnal soul, whereof the worship will cost thee many more sacrifices.

The Afrāsiyāb⁸ of that soul suddenly imprisoned thee, like Bizhan,⁹ in this well.

And the demon Akvān¹⁰ came in war and placed a stone over the top of this well,

Such a stone that the people of the world have not the strength to move it.

Therefore thou needest a Rustam¹¹ to come this way and lift this heavy stone from the well,

Raise thee up from this dark well and bring thee into the spiritual retreat,

Turn thy face from the deceitful Turkestan¹² of nature towards the Iran of the Holy Law,

Guide thee to the Kai Khusrau¹³ of the soul and then place in thy hand the goblet of Jamshīd,

In order that in that goblet thou mayst see for ever with thy own eyes every single atom as clear as the sun.

Thy Rustam then, on the road, is the spiritual teacher whose mount is the Rakhsh¹⁴ of fortune.

Since the mad dog's breath is such that the influence of it upon men is plain to see,

Sit before the great man, who is a man of might, for his influence is far extending,

For whoever loves the master, all his shortcomings will be made good.

[*Ri.* 95]

But thou art neither master nor disciple, for one moment thou art Bāyazīd¹⁵ and then thou art Yazīd.¹⁶

How long wilt thou be the sign of the zodiac with two bodies, standing in the middle between unbelief and belief?

Thou art neither a man of the patched garment¹⁷ nor a man of the girdle;¹⁸ thou art neither this nor that, but both at once.

In thy stupidity thou hast cut thyself off from Islam without having fully attained to Christianity.'

(5) Story of the Christian who became a Muslim¹⁹

'A Christian became a Muslim and, filled with triumph, the fool went wine-drinking the next day.

When his mother saw him drunk, in her sorrow she said to him: "O son, what hast thou done?"

For Jesus has quickly become offended with thee and Mohammed is not pleased with thee either."—

To walk like a catamite is not good, for the effeminate person is not His man.

Walk manfully in the faith which thou hast, for cowardice in the faith is idolatry.'

[*Ro.* 77]

(6) Story of the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar²⁰

' 'Umar took up a passage from the Torah. When the Prophet saw him thus occupied, he said:

"The Torah cannot be trifled with; perhaps thou wilt turn thyself into a pure Jew."—

Indeed one should be a pure Jew, for better such a Jew than someone raw and immature.

Thou art neither this nor that. This is forbidden to thee, for imperfection in religion is a fault.

Thou art perfect neither in unbelief nor in belief—say at least where thou standest.’

(7) Story of the Guebre who built a bridge²¹

‘A Guebre, whose name was Pīr and who was very serious in his Guebredom,

[*Ri.* 96]

Built a bridge at his own expense, loving travellers with heart and soul.

One day the Sultan of the the Faith Maḥmūd the Conqueror came to that bridge upon a journey.

He saw a worthy bridge leading from the road, both handsome and well placed.

He said to someone: “This is a noble work of charity. Who laid the foundation of such a bridge?”

They told him: “A Guebre called Pīr.” From jealousy the king halted where he was.

He called for the Guebre and said to him: “Thou art Pīr, but I think thou art the enemy of true believers.

Come, receive from me in full the value of all the gold that thou didst spend on the bridge.

For, since thou art a Guebre, thy soul is unblessed. For thee such a bridge is beyond the stream,

And if thou wilt not take this gold, how wilt thou cross? Take it across the bridge with me.”

The Guebre spoke openly and said: “If the king cuts my person to pieces,

I will not sell it or take gold for it, for I laid these foundations for my faith.”

The king imprisoned him and for his torment gave him neither bread nor water in prison.

Finally when the torment had passed all bounds, the Guebre’s heart fell into the dust and turned to blood.

He sent a message to the king saying: “Rise up, mount thy horse this very hour,

[*Ro.* 78]

Bring with thee a reputable craftsman to assess the full value of the bridge.”

At this the king of the age rejoiced and set out for the bridge with a crowd of followers.

When the king and his many followers had arrived, that wise Guebre stood upon the bridge.

He opened his mouth and said: "O king, ask me now the price of this bridge.

I shall procure my own death on *this* bridge and give thee thy answer on *that* bridge.

Behold the price, O lofty king." So he spoke and plunged straight into the water.

[*Ri. 97*]

When he threw himself into the water the water carried him off and he sacrificed soul and body.

He sacrificed body and soul but did not abandon his faith: since the former was his intention he did not engage upon the latter.—

A fire-worshipper flung himself into the water in order that no harm might come to his faith.

But thy Islam is such that the water has carried thee away for ever.

When a Guebre has so much greater devotion than thou, then learn Islam from a Guebre.

Who throughout the whole world will have the effrontery to bring false coin before God?

One must produce coin of good quality on the Day of Judgment for only such an alloy will satisfy the Assayer.

In that hour when thy soul has departed from thy body, how canst thou appear before God with a heart full of idols?

Cast away all these idols that are with thee under thy skin, for with an idol-temple it is impossible to appear before the Friend.

If someone's foot goes to sleep how shall he walk to the pulpit?

Since a foot that has gone to sleep cannot walk to the pulpit, so a heart that has fallen to sleep cannot attain to God.

If a man is awake for a single moment even though it be a single moment it is a great deal.

All thy life thou hast reposed in indifference, never hast thou seen the face of wakefulness.

Who would have such profitless sleep? For when he awakes, it is death.

After all, if thou art not concerned for thyself, O man, who will be concerned for thee afterwards?

Carry without complaining the load which thou hast; perform with thy own hand the task which thou hast.

For no one will concern himself with your labours or carry your burden even for a moment.'

(8) Question put by a dervish to Ja'far Ṣādiq²²

'A dervish sincerely asked a question of Ja'far Ṣādiq, saying:

"Why all these acts of devotion day and night?" That heart-illuminating candle answered:

[*Ri.* 98]

[*Ro.* 79]

"Since no one else performed my task and no other than I ate my daily bread,

Since it was I that had to perform my task, I shook idleness off my shoulders.

Since my daily bread was allotted to me from the beginning, I have been left with neither greed nor avarice.²³

Since my death was allotted to me without my volition, I have walked towards my death.

Since I found no faith amongst men, I have chosen with heart and soul the faith of God.

Apart from this whatever I have thought after I have thought it I have abandoned it."—

I do not know if thou art self-sufficient. When wilt thou recover from so much distraction?

My wishes and thine are three-sided—thou wishest them to be four-sided.

Face one way like the Ka'ba if thou art one of us—why art thou like the dice?²⁴

Thou wert not created for play; thou wert created for grandeur.

Do not throw away thy life, beware! Place no reliance on thy life from now on.

Dost thou not know that every night the morning has hastened away and that in sleep the pocket of thy life has been picked?

I fear lest, when thou awakest, thou wilt find no cash and be in evil case.

Thy whole occupation appears to be play; thy praying appears to be the negation of praying.

The prayer that thou hast carelessly offered thou shalt not receive the price of a single loaf for it.'

(9) Speech of a madman regarding a prayer that was not worth a loaf of bread²⁵

'They said to a madman, who walked in the way of reproach:²⁶

"On the Day of Judgment there will be a man peddling his ten-year-old prayers up and down the valley.

No one will give even a loaf of bread for them, though he talks much about them in front of the crowd."

[Ri. 99]

The madman replied: "They are not worth it, all of his prayers are not worth a single loaf.

For if the people of the Valley would buy them, there would be no need for so much peddling."—

If thou have a hundred acts in allegory and mention them only in thy prayers,

Since thy prayers are thus allegorical they are in reality ritual impurity.'

[Ro. 80]

(10) Story of the madman and the Friday prayer²⁷

"There was a madman of the people of Ray who never prayed except alone.

With much entreaty someone persuaded him to join the congregation on a Friday.

When the imam raised his voice the madman began to bellow.

After the prayer someone asked him, "Was not thy soul afraid of God during the prayer

That thou madest the sound of a cow at the congregation? Thy head should be cut off like the head of a candle."

He answered: "The imam was my leader, since it was lawful for me to follow his example.

When he was selling a cow during the *Ḥamdu li'llah*²⁸ he heard the sound of a cow from me also.

Since I made him my leader in everything, whatever he does I do likewise."

Someone hurried up to the preacher and questioned him in detail about the matter.

The preacher said to him: "When I finished the *takbīr* I remembered that I own a village in a distant part.

When I began to read *al-ḥamdu li'llah* I was reminded of the village cattle.

I have no cattle. I was buying a cow when I heard the sound of a cow behind me."'

[Ri. 100]
Discourse VI

The son said to him: 'All people everywhere give way to their desires.
They do not proceed in accordance with their desires only when they
behave hypocritically.

Since it is the age of self today, I see no heart prevailing over self.
If following my desires I too make some little use of magic,
Since in the end I shall repent, it will not, O father, do me so much
harm.'

Father's reply

The father said to him: 'O deluded one, far removed from the secrets of
truth,

Do not waste thy life today for thou knowest that tomorrow thou shalt
be no more.

[Ro. 81]

Thou art going to Babylon, O dotard, to learn magic from Hārūt and
Mārūt.

For thousands of years those two angels have hung head downwards,
thirsty in the well

And between them and the water of that well there is (strange to tell)
not the distance of a single span.

Since they cannot give themselves water how can they open the door for
thee?

When the masters are thus distraught who will be their pupil?

I see thee today turned into a devil; thou wilt not tomorrow be turned
into an angel.

Death is driving thee giddy and heedless to Babylon.

If thy death were not to be in Babylon, this wish would not be in thy
heart.'

[Ri. 101]

(1) Story of 'Izrā'il,¹ Solomon and a certain man²

'I have heard that 'Izrā'il, the Soul-Consumer, one day entered Solomon's palace.

He beheld a young man seated in front of him: the angel cast a glance at his face.

After he had seen the young man he went out: the young man was overwhelmed with fear of him.

Quickly he said to Solomon: "Give command that a cloud may straightway

Carry me to some place far from hence, for I am sick with the dread of death."

Solomon spoke and a cloud carried him straightway from Fars to India.

When a day had passed since this mystery, 'Izrā'il again appeared before the throne.

Solomon said to him: "O swordless shedder of blood, why didst thou cast a keen glance at the young man?"

'Izrā'il answered him: "The command had reached me from the Court of God

To bear him off within three days, to snatch up his soul unawares in India.

When I saw him here I was perplexed as to how he should go from here to India in three days.

When the cloud bore him off to India I went thither and seized his soul."—

This tale is ever apposite to thy case, for it is impossible to evade the sentence passed in eternity without beginning.

What will become of the plans that men have made, for their predestined fate is contrary to their will?³

Look always at the point of the First Decree; do not be squint-eyed in thy looking.

[Ro. 82]

Since His work is not like thine, if a rose blooms it will become a thorn for thee.

Since whoever found himself in duality was a polytheist, my calamity was I-ness and thou-ness.

When the duality is entirely gone, this will and that will will be one.⁴

[Ri. 102]

If from every eyelash thou sheddest a hundred tears of blood—thy eyes have been closed—how shalt thou open them?

Since thy hands are tied, O weary one, what then can be loosened with thy tied hands?

Whilst the wise are affected with religious pain thou wouldst find thyself in the midst of magic.

In all parts of the world people suffer pain; their heads are strewn in the battle-field.

Hast thou religious pain for a single moment? Thou hast not; thou hast nothing but a craving for idleness.

If thou shouldst recognise a single atom of religious pain thou wouldst die of longing for [the true] life.

But since no sword has touched thy liver, thou wilt never know pain or sorrow.'

(2) Story of the young man who was killed by a mangonel stone⁵

'A young man had a friend of long standing; he was struck by a stone from a mangonel.

He was weltering in dust and blood; with his soul at his lips his head was reeling.

Two moments were left of his life, when his friend, in the midst of his weakness,

Said to him: "Tell me how thou feelest." He answered: "Art thou mad?

If a stone hits thee from a mangonel thou wilt know how this friend of thine feels.

But until thou art struck by a stone how shalt thou know?" He spoke and escaped from life.—

Thou dost not know in what pain men find themselves; those who have died know about pain.

If thou knowest of a cure for my pain, apply it, otherwise depart and sit elsewhere.

My lot, since my moon is behind a cloud, is nought but grief, and grief, and grief.

I have a hundred kinds of sorrow here, each of them larger than a hundred mountains.

Were I to tell the tale of my sorrows to the sea and the mountains,

[*Ri. 103*]

The mountains would become a flood of water from sorrow; all the mountains would turn into tears like the sea.

There is a true tradition that every day, when morning breaks,

Between the Four Pillars⁶ and the Seven Circles⁷ there appear from the hidden seventy clouds.

[*Ro. 83*]

Upon that heart which is grieved because of God sorrow rains down

from sixty-nine of the clouds

But upon every heart that can bear to be without God there rains down pure joy from the one cloud.⁸

Earth and heaven are a sea of pain, in which he is not drowned who is a man indeed.

When I take up my abode beside the sea I am in perpetual fear of the waves.

I went down to a sea, O friend, wherein are drowned the souls of hundreds of thousands.

When so many souls sink all the time how should half a soul be visible?

It is not strange that I should be lost at once; it would be strange if I remained in sight.'

(3) Story of the madman in the town of Cairo⁹

'In the town of Cairo there was a madman who had the eye of positive knowledge.¹⁰

Thus he said: "If one lost on the Way dies suddenly of grief for the Beloved,

This is not strange. What is strange is that with this burning within him a lover remains alive for a single day."—

If a lover does remain alive for a day, like a candle he is ever weeping and burning.

The condition of a lover receives no light unless he burn in solitude like a candle.

Since the burning of a lover is greater than that of a hundred candles, his light, like the light of a candle, is from his own wax.

If the wretched lover attains to the Beloved, he walks on his head like a pair of compasses.'

(4) Story of Fakhr-al-Din Gurgānī¹¹ and the Sultan's slave¹²

'In Gurgān¹³ there was a farseeing king¹⁴ who was both kind and pious.
[Ri. 104]

Because of the kindness of his nature and his power and high repute Fakhr Gurgānī entered his service.

He allowed his tongue to sing his praises, for that king used to treat him very well.

That king of the age had a slave who, like Joseph, was peerless in beauty of face.

His two locks were like two musky fishes. What do I say? they were two

Hindus in China.¹⁵

[Ro. 84]

His cheeks were like the moon and his locks like fishes: his kingdom stretched from the Fish to the Moon.¹⁶

If an eye beheld his eyebrows, it was struck with a shaft from his crooked eyebrows.

His narcissi¹⁷ because of their lashes shared lodgings with thorns; his lips were sisters to the pomegranate.

His sweet lips had so much sugar that the cane had its loins girt before them.¹⁸

His mouth was narrower than the eye of a needle; therefore the eye was not conscious of his mouth.

One day that glorious king called his army and began to hold a feast.

Fakhr was seated joyfully that day when there entered that world-illuminating slave.

With his beauty he played the highwayman wherever there was a soul to be found; with his sweetness he scattered sugar throughout the world.

Thousands of hearts he stole with his eyelashes; with every hair he stole a hundred souls.

The lasso of his locks he had cast over the earth; with his lips he cast confusion into the heavens.

When Fakhr beheld his face he yielded himself up to him; all of his soul departed and he gave his heart to him.

But for fear of the king he did not dare to look into his moon-like face.

Though deprived of his senses he kept his senses about him; he manfully kept control over his eyes.

The king at once divined that secret but did not draw back the curtain therefrom.

When the guests of the feast were drunk with wine, they fell down because of that drunkenness.

In that assembly, from wine and from the face of the loved one two kinds of drunkenness were apparent on Fakhr.

[Ri. 105]

So agitated was his soul with fire that it was utterly consumed thereby.

Though burning in the midst of an agitated crowd, yet he controlled himself like a candle.

The king of Gurgān, seeing Fakhr thus, his heart between love and fire,

At once presented his slave to him: the eloquent one, for joy thereat, became dumb.

From the burning of love and shame before the noble king he turned (strange to relate) straightway a hundred colours.

The king said to him: "What has befallen thee that thou art dead? The slave is thine. Take him and be off with thee."

The slave and Fakhr both joyfully departed from the king's assembly.

But although Fakhr, beside himself as he was, was likewise drunk, he applied the wisdom of a philosopher.

[*Ro. 85*]

To the nobles who stood before the king, all cognisant of good and evil,
He said: "Tonight the king is drunk and this slave too is far gone with wine.

If tonight I take this slave from the king's presence to my own house until dawn,

When the king is sober again tomorrow, if he repents of his action,

Or if he has forgotten what he did, or if his blood boils with jealousy,

Since his slave has been with me, if I tell him so it will be futile.

He will shed my innocent blood on suspicion, he will cast me in the road to the dogs.

He will say to me: 'Didst thou not know, thou ignoramus, that a drunkard does not speak like a man in his senses?'

Why wert thou not patient for one night until in the morning the victorious king was sober?'

I shall not take him with me now, for the king is drunk. One must weigh the good and ill."

They all said: "Thy counsel is right that his sleeping-place tonight should be with the king."

Under that mighty king's throne there was a vault of solid stone.

[*Ri. 106*]

In that vault was a beautiful couch, on which were ten covers all of brocade.

In front of all that assembly he laid the drunken slave there together with two or three candles.

In his honour he lit two candles there and came out, but he was burning like a candle.

Then Fakhr Gurgānī locked the door of the vault in front of the nobles.

Then he gave them the key and until daybreak he slept before that door filled with heart-illuminating love.

When the next day the king sat to drink wine, Fakhr came in and girded his loins in service.

The nobles opened their lips in speech and then laid the key before the king.

They told him how Fakhr had acted, how indeed his caution had exceeded all bounds.

Because the king had given him that slave while drunk, he had maintained his respect for him.

He had locked him up in front of ten persons pending the king's command.

The king said: "His behaviour towards me was perfect. This slave is his private property."

At this Fakhr became joyful in the extreme, his heart shot up in flames from that joy.

Finally when he opened the vault, he shed from either eye many tears of blood.

For he beheld that moon-faced one turned ugly, changed into charcoal from head to foot.

[Ro. 86]

Fire had leapt up from a candle and fallen upon that peri-like one's covering.

All at once he had been utterly burnt from head to foot, neither clothes were left nor bed.

Because of the drunkenness of wine and sleep he had been drowned in the burning fire.

When Fakhr saw the face of his loved one thus, in that moment he saw the coin of his life as a world of fire.

Since his loved one had fallen in the fire, all he could do was himself to fall in the fire.

How shall I say how mad of heart he became? Much madness was impressed upon him.

[Ri. 107]

In that madness he rushed into the desert; he turned around, day and night, like the wheel of heaven.

When his love had passed all bounds, he came to terms with his sorrow and made the story of Vis and Rāmin¹⁹ his refrain.

He put his grief into it although he told the tale in his name.

Day and night in the desert he wrote and walked; in the midst of dust and blood he slept and walked.—

Thou hast not suffered upon this road; thou knowest nothing of the secret of lovers.

How shouldst thou know the case of a lover, whose place of worship is above the gallows?

Thou must perform the ritual ablution with thine own blood in order that that place of worship may be brought before thee.'

(5) Story of Ḥusain Manṣūr Ḥallāj²⁰ on the gallows²¹

'When suddenly upon the gallows they so cruelly cut off Ḥallāj's hands

With that blood which poured from his hands he smeared all of his face and forearms.

They said to him: "O madman, why hast thou smeared thy limbs with blood

For if thou performest thy ablutions with blood, thy very prayers are a state of ritual impurity."

Then he said: "Whoever has found the secret of love must perform the ablutions for his prayers with blood."

Set thy foot like a man in the street of the Beloved; fear the praise or scorn of no mortal creature.

For every heart which is steadfast because of the Eternal is not in the least afraid of the blame of the censorious.

Come, apply thyself like a man to the work of God; bid farewell to strangers and apply thyself to that work.

Why roll around the world like the wheel [of the heavens]? Rise manfully above self-interest.

For if thy love is so cowardly, thy very joints will ache from shame.

[*Ro.* 87]

How many powerful lions have become like ants because of the power of love!

Thou, who art less than an ant in strength and size, how shalt thou cope with love?

[*Ri.* 108]

(6) Story of the power over Majnūn of his love for Lailā²²

'Whenever Majnūn saw Lailā's door he could not endure the sight and would run away.

The colour of his face would become like saffron, and his hair would become from end to end like so many lances.

All his limbs would fall a-trembling like a fox that beholds a fierce lion.

They said to him: "O thou who livest in separation, no-one has seen any one as brave as thou.

Thou hast no fear of the lion of the forest and art never afraid of the panther.

Thou wanderest in the desert and on the mountains; in thy manliness thou dost not fear the whole world.

When Lailā's door comes in sight thou turnest pale and tremblest like an aspen."

Then said Majnūn filled with grief: "He who does not fear the two worlds

See how great is the strength of the lion of love who tramples him under-foot like an ant."—

All that strength which is the cash of every being is bought but wind

before the strength of the hand of love.

If thou livest up to these words thou shalt be the companion of that cypress tree.

When the lover puts himself to the proof, he wins his eternal Beloved.'

(7) Story of the moon-faced boy and the beauty-seeking dervish²³

'There was a handsome moon-faced boy such that musk was but one hair of his head.

The end of his locks formed the letter *dāl*,²⁴ which *dāl* was nought but the guide to wickedness.

In his cheeks he beheld the moon in a mirror; in his lips he contended with rubies.

When he continually hunted hearts with his eyebrows, a record was made of that continuity.²⁵

His mouth was a vermilion *jazm*;²⁶ from the *jazm* of pause there came the twenty-nine letters.²⁷

[*Ri. 109*]

Since on account of its narrowness a single letter cannot be contained in it, it is fitting that it will not hold more than twenty-nine letters.

Now pearls were but his slaves;²⁸ now the moon was but his thrall.²⁹

A certain dervish was sick with love for him; all the cash of his heart had turned to blood.

[*Ro. 88*]

When his hot love threw him into the fire, his very joints grew hot from the fire.

When finally his endurance was at an end he came before that sweet-heart of the world.

He said: "My pain has no cure, for it is impossible to live without thee.

I will not live without thee for a single moment. I have but one life. The rest thou knowest.

If thou wilt spare me, I lie before thee; if thou wilt kill me, I stand ready.

Without thee I cannot endure. Do what thou wilt. Make haste."

When the boy heard this secret from his lover, he said to him: "If thou wilt stake thy life,

I will sift thee in the sieve of trial and will see how much thou dost respect me and what the worth of thy life is."

When the dervish heard these words he rose up; he became as hot as fire, he rose up like smoke.

The boy straightway mounted a horse and went out into the country far from men.

He threw a rope around the neck of the dervish and then drove his horse forward.

He galloped the horse and when the dervish saw this he ran behind with the rope around his neck.

Much did he make him run in every direction, many a hardship did he cause him.

Finally, when he had made him run for a long time, he dragged him into a field all full of thorns.

That unfortunate wretch was wounded in a hundred places by thorns in his feet as on a rose branch.

When his beloved became aware of his secret, namely that that love-sick one was indeed a captive [of love],

That there was no lust in him but he was true and worthy of the secrets of lovemaking.

[*Ri. 110*]

That world-adorning one dismounted from his horse and from heart-felt love laid his foot upon his lap.

All day, with his own hands, he pulled out from his feet the heart-piercing thorns one by one.

The love-sick dervish said to himself: "How would it be if each thorn were a hundred thorns?

For the more wounds there were in my body the greater the ease and comfort of my heart."

He uttered these words, hidden in his heart, whilst so many roses had bloomed from the thorns in his feet:

"Had these thorns not been in my feet, I should not have been beside this boy."—

Since the thorns are in thy feet for the sake of the Beloved, each one of them is a rose-garden, not a thorn.

Call on His name until thou art slain and all thy limbs are soaked in blood.

When His name drinks up thy blood it will make those who gaze at thee gaze at thy blood.'

[*Ro. 89*]

(8) Story of the blind man and Shaikh Nūrī³⁰

'There was a blind man upon the road who opened his mouth and kept saying "Allāh".

When Nūrī heard him utter the name of God, in his impatience he ran up to him.

He said to him: "What dost thou know of Him? And if thou knowest,

why dost thou remain alive?"

So he spoke and became so much beside himself as though his yearning soul had departed from his body.

In that ecstasy he suddenly made off into the country and on the road a reed-bed had been mowed down.

So did he beat himself upon the reed-bed that he cut himself to pieces with the wounds.

Finally so much blood had left his body that his life departed painfully along with the blood.

Men looked and found him dead and the whole place soaked with his blood.

From the blood of the breast of that man slain on the Road there was written at the end of every reed the word "Allāh".—

So must one listen to the music of the reed, be slain by the reed and slumber in blood.

[*Ri. 111*]

When thou hearest the name of the Friend be thus; atom by atom become a sea of fire.

If thou wilt not stake thy life for love, the love thou shalt have will be unreal.³¹

If in love thou art one of the initiated, thou wilt stake thy life because of the trueness of thy love.'

(9) Story of Shaikh Abu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī³²

'When Bu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī was suddenly passing out of Hamadan, He came to an idol-temple, beside which he saw a crowd standing as spectators.

On a fire he saw a cauldron full of oil which was boiling like the billowing sea.

Some time passed and a Christian³³ entered and prostrated himself before the idol.

They asked him saying: "O humble one, what art thou to God?" He said: "A slave."

They said: "Then make thy offering quickly." He made an offering and departed like smoke.

Another entered and did likewise; in the same manner ten persons were dismissed.

[*Ro. 90*]

Finally another came forward, excessively weak and feeble. He was emaciated, pale, shrivelled and lean, like a corpse upon a bed.³⁴

They asked him, saying: "What then art thou? For thou art as if a dead

man were living.”

He answered: “I am a piece of skin: I love my God.”

When he had said this they said: “Sit down.” He sat down comfortably on a golden throne.

They brought that oil straightway and poured it over his head.

From the heat of the cauldron of oil the distressful man’s skull fell at his feet.

When the skull had been quickly removed they at once burnt the whole of him,

[*Ri. 112*]

Saying, “The dust from his ashes is the cure to every pain there is.”

When the shaikh saw this from afar, he fled away and pondered much over that matter.

He said to himself: “O thou who art concerned with sport, when a Christian came to a false love

He sacrificed his life for that love. If thy life be one of the initiated

Be likewise in thy love of God, otherwise consort with catamites.

Since he is thus in his love of the idol, if thou art certain of thy love of God,

Bid farewell to thy life or forsake thy faith. Since thou cannot do the former, do the latter.””

Discourse VII

The son said to him: 'This is a lofty matter. Who knows how far it is to the heights of love?

One can ascend in accordance with one's capacity, one can climb to the top step by step.

When the summit of life-consuming love is so high, how can any one reach it in a single day?

Why should I continually strain after a branch to which my hand cannot reach?

I cannot get the thought of magic out of my head, I must carry this enterprise through to the end.

Since my heart craves this, what shall I do? I shall do it even if my heart is emptied of blood.'

[Ro. 91]

Father's reply

The father said to him: 'Thou must wish for something which is righteous before God.

For if thou art unworthy of what thou wishest it will bring thee nothing but ruin.'

[Ri. 113]

(1) Story of Jesus and the man who wished to know the Greatest Name¹

'That man besought Jesus one day saying, "Teach me the greatest name of God."

The Messiah said to him: "Thou art not fitting for this. Why dost thou ask for something to which thou art not equal?"

The man made use of many oaths and said: "I must be informed of this name."

When finally Jesus taught him the Greatest Name, his heart flared up like a candle from joy thereat.

One day that man was passing through the desert hastening like a gust of wind.

In the middle of the road he saw a pit full of bones. He reflected and then decided.

To seek a sign of the Highest Name and to test it in the lowest form.

By that name he called upon his God to bring those bones straightway to life.

When he had uttered that name the bones at once quickly joined together and found a living soul.

There appeared therefrom a lion, which shot flames of fire from its eyes.

It struck one blow of its paw and killed that man; with its paw it broke his back.

Then it cruelly devoured him and left his bones in the middle of the road.

In that same place, where a male lion's bones had lain, the pit was quickly filled with the bones of a man.

When Jesus heard of this, he was distressed; he opened his mouth and said to his friends

"When a man asks God for something of which he is not worthy God does not grant it to him."

One cannot ask God for everything that is good, for one can ask him only in accordance with one's worth.

If thou art worthy thou shalt have whatever thou askest and more,

[*Ri. 114*]

For if thy part is to plead and pray, His is simply to give.

What reasons canst thou bring? He will bestow if He so desires.'

[*Ro. 92*]

(2) Story of Abraham and Nimrod²

'When Nimrod was eighty years old he was all at once overwhelmed with misfortune.

Although from pride he had the body of an elephant, yet he was way-laid by a gnat.

He knew of a certainty that because he had denied God He had set this gnat to work.

He said to Abraham: "It is well known that I have more than a thousand hoards of treasure,

All full of red gold and jewels. I will give it to thee if thou wilt pray

That by His grace and mercy God Almighty may grant me perfection in the light of belief."

Khalil⁸ then laid his face to the ground, opened his mouth and said: "O pure Upholder,

Undo the lock in the heart of this ignorant man, move the chain and open the door,

Refresh his drunken soul with faith; by Thy grace do not suffer him to die an idolater."

There came a voice from God saying. "O Prophet, do not concern thyself with him nor distress thyself.

We set no price on faith, for this jewel of faith is a gift.

For when We so wish a command is issued, and a Christian becomes a Muslim."—

The pious, who perceived God's indifference, neither slept by night nor rested by day.⁴

Since they were blind as to the centre of secrets, the heads of them all were turned like a pair of compasses.

Since no one is informed about the last moment, our share of that moment is nought but fear and danger.'

[Ri. 115]

(3) Story of the Magian⁵ and Shaikh Bāyazīd⁶

'A Magian, his loins girt with a girdle,⁷ came to Bāyazīd from the market.

He became a Muslim and withdrew from doubt; then he cut his girdle to pieces.

When that Magian turned Muslim cut his girdle, the shaikh wept long and bitterly.

Someone said to him: "O Shaikh, why hast thou fallen a-weeping seeing that this is an occasion for rejoicing?"

He answered: "I fell a-weeping thinking how it was possible that after seventy years

The girdle should be loosened from his waist and in a moment his loss should become gain.

[Ro. 93]

If that girdle should be fastened around my waist, what should I do? How should I act? That is why I am weeping."—

If He were to fasten this girdle which He has just broken about another what redress has he?

If it be not a sin to break the girdle why is it not allowable to put it on?

Thousands of gall-bladders and hearts will be water and blood before it is known why this is so.

If the soul had no value there neither man would die [nor] beast be slaughtered.

If thou raise thy head to the heavens or if thou make thy home in a well,

If thou break thy head or if thou hold it high, it will change neither thy end nor thy beginning.

Whether thou be headless or haughty, it seems to me that thou art of the same price to God's indifference.'

(4) Story of the madman who beat his head against the door of the Ka'ba⁸

'A madman, weeping and with burning heart, remained before the Ka'ba one night till morning.

He said in sweet language: "If Thou wilt not open the door to me, I will strike my head against this door like a knocker,

So that in the end my head may be broken and my heart relieved from this constant burning."

[*Ri. 116*]

A voice from heaven then spoke: "Twice or three times this house has been full of idols.

Those idols inside were broken; what then if one idol outside is broken?

If thou breakest thy head outside, thou art an idol that shall be overturned.

Such a head will not be missed upon this road, on which the sea is not more than a single drop of dew."

When a pious man heard this voice from heaven, having eavesdropped upon these mysteries,

He fell to the ground and his eyes ran blood. Many a life can bleed away from such grief.—

Since we cannot struggle with Him, it is useless to shout with a hundred lamentations.'

(5) Story of Job⁹

'It is related that the prophet Job, who for a whole lifetime was plagued with tribulations,

Had experienced pain from the wolves of this world and had also suffered much hardship from worms.

Gabriel came to him and said: "O pure one, what art thou? Complain with all thy grieving soul,

[*Ro. 94*]

Because if thou wert to perish every moment God would have no care.

If thou practise patience for a lifetime, thou art not God even if thou have more than patience."—

Fate has so turned the compass that no one is aware of any single point of it.

Heart knows not of heart nor of soul either, but things go on without the one or the other.'

(6) Story of Yūsuf Hamadānī¹⁰

'Thus said one day that heart-illuminating candle, the all-knowing Yūsuf of Hamadan:

"Thus said the nobles to Joseph, 'O thou who hast broken Zulaikhā's heart,

[*Ri.* 117]

She has become a helpless, friendless woman and is sick because of thy indifference.

Thou hast stolen her heart away from her while she is still alive. Thou canst, if thou wilt, give it back to her again.'

Thus said Joseph: 'I never stole the heart of that feeble old woman.

I know nothing about the stealing of her heart not have I ever sought to practise the stealing of hearts.

I have nothing to do with her heart nor did I ever think of this.'—

Thou tellest me that thou hast lost thy heart these twenty years. That is impossible.

He that is unaware of his own heart, how shall he find his way into the heart of another?'

(7) Story of Zulaikhā¹¹

'A friend asked Zulaikhā: "How did Joseph steal thy heart? Tell me truthfully.

For if thou still hast that heart, thou playest the coquette if thou askest Joseph to return thy heart."

Zulaikhā swore a mighty oath: "If I have the slightest information about my heart,

I do not know why it fell in love, or if it fell in love whither it is gone

Though Joseph has no firm hold on my heart, yet Zulaikhā has not that heart either."—

Since neither this has happened nor that and there is neither love nor beloved,

Whither else is this heart departed? What shall I say of this talisman and the pretence?

What a polo-stick which so hit a ball that it ran from the east to the west!

Then it said: "Have a care, O nimble ball, run cautiously lest thou fall into a hole.

For if, O ball, thou runnest crookedly along the road, thou wilt remain for ever in the fire and the pit."

[Ro. 95]

Since the ball's course cannot take place without the polo-stick, the fault is not that of the rolling ball.

Although the sin was not of thy committing yet the blame is on thy shoulders.'¹²

[Ri. 118]

(8) Allegory¹³

'A pious man said: "Eternity past is like a bow from which thousands of arrows are shot every moment.

On the other side eternity to come is the target. There is no possibility of a road from this side nor from that,

For every arrow that is shot straight from the bow, it is a blessing which the archer has sought.

But as for every arrow that is shot out of true, curses are rained down upon it.

I do not know of a stranger state than this; my heart has turned to blood, I know no more.'"

(9) Story of Abū Bakr Sufāla¹⁴

'Thus spoke Abū Bakr Sufāla, in whom men always trust:

"They put me in water and say: 'Never get wet, though left behind.

For though thou be submerged, yet thou art such that if thou become wet thou art one of the draggle-tailed ones.'"—

Do not get wet although thou be always in the water. In this predicament what would the lion of the forest contrive?

Who knows how cruelly men walk in blood on account of this grief?

If it were thy lot to suffer this pain a whole world would draw blood from thy heart.'

(10) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the madman¹⁵

'One day Maḥmūd went into a deserted place and found a madman filled with anguish.

He had on his head a felt hat; he had rejected the good and evil of the world.

When the Sultan came up to him, it was as though he bore all the grief in the world.

Not for one moment did he look at the Sultan, and not for an instant did he cease to grieve.

[*Ri.* 119]

The king said to him: "What grief dost thou bear? For it is as though thou hadst a hundred mountains on thy heart."

[*Ro.* 96]

The man spoke from behind the curtain of mysteries: "O thou who wert reared behind a hundred curtains of luxury,

If thou hadst a hat of this same felt, thou wouldst have some access to this grief,

But in the midst of kingship what dost thou know of the hardship and pain of separation?"—

For the wax sleeping lapped in a hundred luxuries alongside the honey, knows neither of fire nor of the scissors.

But when it is made into a candle, from its burning will be made the light of the banquet;

And when from fire its crown turns to tears, it will know what is to befall thee.

Thou too at this moment art not aware of thyself, but thou shalt be in the moment when thou art taken away.

With every single breath thou wilt clearly know that thou wast dead whilst still alive.'

(11) Story of the cut tree¹⁶

'Someone had cut a green tree. There passed by chance one who knew pain.

He said: "This sturdy branch which has been lopped away

Lies fresh and full of sap upon the ground because it does not yet know that it has been cut.

It is as yet unaware of its hurt; in a week's time it will know."—

Thou knowest nothing of thy condition now, but only when the bird of thy soul comes to thy lips.

Thou seest the bird of thy soul¹⁷ caught in a snare because of grain. Who

gives this grain to such a bird?

When Adam gave grain to the bird of the soul he was cast out from the eternal Paradise.¹⁸

But had Adam not eaten wheat, man would eat only man.

If the birds and beasts flee from thee, they flee because thou eatest them.'

[Ri. 120]

(12) Story of Ḥasan Baṣrī¹⁹ and Rābi'a²⁰

Ḥasan went out one day from Baṣra and came to Rābi'a in the desert.

Many mountain goats, gazelles and the game were gathered around her on every side.

When they saw Ḥasan in the distance, they at once took fright and fled away from Rābi'a.

[Ro. 97]

When Ḥasan saw this it affected him, for a time he was tormented with jealousy.

Then he asked Rābi'a outright, "Why do the creatures of this place

Not flee from thee and yet are frightened of me? Perhaps they thought me ill-disposed towards them?"

Then Rābi'a asked him a secret: "What hast thou eaten?" He answered: "Onions fried in fat.

I had at the time, O pure minded one, some onions and a little fat to hand.

With great trouble I melted a little fat and I ate it just before I came out."

When Rābi'a heard this secret from him, she uttered these words worthy indeed of a man:

"Thou hast eaten the fat of these poor creatures—how should they not run away from thee?"—

If thou eat but little like an ant, the worms in thy grave will have but little to eat.

If thou nourish thyself every day with a single date, thou shalt be safe from the worms of thy coffin.

Since the worms will make for thy limbs, these worms will content themselves with a single date.

Thou art so fortified with water and bread; thou hast filled thy belly like a hero.

Thou art nothing, man, without the privy and the kitchen. Is thy heart not weary, man, of these two hells?

Thou goest from one hell to another; thou goest from the privy to the kitchen.

Since thou canst not do for a moment without sweetmeats and delicacies, how long in thy madness will thou pursue visions?

[*Ri. 121*]

Thou wert told to purify thy soul and thou art always cultivating thy body.

Thou shouldst always respect the inner reality and yet thou dost nought but serve the outward appearance.

Someone said: "Set fire to thy self. When thou hast eaten a morsel, sit down and be silent."

(13) Story of Moses

'God said to Moses: "O man of secrets, when thou art alone watch thy heart.

And if thou art with people, be kind; at that time watch thy tongue.

When thou walkest along the road keep thy head forward; keep thy gaze in front of thee,

And if men spread ten table-cloths before thee, watch thy gullet also."—

Since thou art without food and art imperfect, thou hast girt up thy loins after food.

[*Ro. 98*]

Just as when that helpless child comes into the world, the milk in the breast wells up to feed him,

Just as it was decreed for that child and milk was put in the breasts to feed him,

Since thy food is always with thee likewise, why do these people fall upon one another?

It is all vanity after all, O vain one. Why dost thou pursue what is vanity?

If thou art wise, cast vanity aside. Thou livest today; cast aside all cares for tomorrow.'²¹

(14) Story of the silent madman

'There was a madman in Baghdad who neither said nor listened to anything.

They said to him: "O helpless fool, why dost thou never utter a word?"

He answered: "To whom should I speak; as there are no men here from whom should I seek an answer?"

They said to him: "The people that now are—dost thou not see that they are all men?"

[*Ri. 122*]

He answered: "These people are not men; only he is a man who from greatness of mind

Cares not about yesterday or tomorrow and has no concern about idle things;

Who never cares about what has not yet come nor is defeated by what is already past;

Who cares not about poverty or his daily bread and has, day and night, only one care."—

For there is only one thing to concern ourselves about in this world and the next—it is certain what I say, there is no doubt in it.

If today thou concernest thyself about tomorrow, thou hast sold away thy life for the cash of today.

Do not grieve for in the world there is no one to comfort thee, and if thou grieveest it will be a thousand times every moment.

Happiness in unhappiness—such is perfection, for it is impossible to seek the cash of happiness.

What will there be worse than this, for already there are a hundred griefs and there will be more?

What wouldst thou of that joy which begets grief and of an existence which springs from non-existence?

Thou shouldst have joy only in Him, otherwise grieve only for thy ill-fortune.

If for a while thou art joyful in Him, thou shalt have the cash of a whole world of joy

And if thou utter His name but once, what slander can then pass thy lips?

(15) Question put by a man to Majnūn about Lailā²²

"Someone asked the griefstricken Majnūn: "What, poor fellow, dost thou say about Lailā?"

Majnūn fell headlong to the ground and said to him: "Say 'Lailā' once again.

Why dost thou expect of me words of deep meaning? It is enough for thee if thou sayest 'Lailā'.

Though many pearls of deep meaning be pierced, it is not as much as if the name of Lailā is pronounced.

When thou hast repeated the name and attributes of Lailā, thou hast uttered world upon world of mysteries.

Since it is possible to utter the name of Lailā always, it seems to me to be blasphemy to speak of aught else even for a moment."

[*Ri. 123*]

If anyone began to pronounce the name of Lailā in front of Majnūn he would recover his reason.

And if they spoke aught else than the name of Lailā he would go mad and utter cries.

If thou art conscious of the loss of self it is right to think of Him,

But whilst there is still the wall of self before thee, if thou thinkest of Him, thou wilt think only of thyself.'

(16) Story of the muezzin and the question a man put to a madman²³

'A kind man with a fine voice was muezzin in Isfahan.

In that town there was a dome so lofty that it rubbed its head against the revolving cupola.

That proud man ascended this dome and called the people to prayers.

A madman was passing by and someone asked him: "Wise man,

What is the muezzin saying on this dome?" He answered: "O good friend,

This is a nut, nothing from end to end but shell, which he is rolling on the dome,²⁴ O friend.

Since he is not moved by the truth of the inner meaning, know of a certainty that it is like [the story of] the nut and the dome."—

Thou art like a nut because of thy inattention when thou enumeratest the ninety-nine names of God.

Because no name produces any effect on thee, thou dost not know the hundredth part of the hundred minus one.

[*Ro. 100*]

What then is thy purpose in all this counting?

Which art thou thinking of, the worshipper or the Worshipped?²⁵

Since He does not count up the thousands of favours He bestows upon thee, neither shouldst thou count up His names like a usurer.

Since God has given no sign of His name—how then canst thou ever mention Him?

Since thou canst not breathe a word about His real essence, thou shouldst not breathe a word about anyone.'

[*Ri. 124*](17) Story of Shaikh Abū Sa'īd²⁶

'Thus said one day the Shaikh of Mihna:²⁷ "I went to the world-illuminating saint.

I found him always extremely silent, immersed in an endless sea.

I said to him: 'Speak a word, O saint, for my heart will be strengthened by thy speaking.'

For a while he bowed his head from ecstasy, then he said: 'O seeker of words,

Dost thou know of anything but God? What then shall I seek? I do not wish to weary thee—what then shall I say?

But that which is certain truth cannot be uttered, that is why I am silent.' "

Since it cannot be said, why all these words? Since it cannot be found, why all this shouting?

It is not for every tongue to mention His name, and yet one cannot be silent even for a moment.

So strange a marvel came to pass because there was a Beloved exceedingly lovely.

It was necessary that there should also be a lover so that the Beloved might now destroy and now revive him.

Between the lover and the Beloved there is a relationship that we are not worthy to describe.

If thou become dumb in thy eloquence then only is it fitting for thee to describe that state.

For from beauty the Beloved was such that He became the sun of earth and heaven.

As the Beloved was alone in His Beauty, without doubt He needed an ardent lover,

For when the Beloved shows His charms he turns the eyes of all lovers into fountains.

Had the Beloved no lovers He would not be worthy of being the Beloved.

Love has never been denied to created man, for none but the lover can know the true value of the beloved.

Such beauty is displayed upon market day only through the ardour of the lovers.

Since the Beloved Himself produces His lovers, He sees no one worthy of Him but the lover.

[*Ro. 101*][*Ri. 125*]

If the Beloved were to withdraw to the star Capella thou wouldst see no lover apart from the Beloved.

Since it is the Beloved Who creates His lovers towards Him, without the Beloved there would be no lovers.

Though the lover be destroyed for ever and be lost in both worlds,

Though he be dead or living, he holds in his hand the heart of the Beloved.'

(18) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz²⁸

'Once at dawn Maḥmūd the Just said to his favourite Ayaz: "O kind-hearted one,

I intend to go hunting today. If thou wilt come too it will be well."

The slave replied: "I have already made a catch for I have been hunting here."

The king said: "What game didst thou catch?" He answered: "Its name is Maḥmūd."

The king said: "This is fine horsemanship. With what didst thou catch game here?"

The slave replied: "O my lofty king, I caught the game with my lasso."

Said the king: "Show me thy lasso." He let his long hair fall to his feet.

"My lasso", he said, "consists of my restless locks and the king of the world is the game that they have caught."

These words affected Maḥmūd's soul. He bowed his head, burning like incense.

Now he writhed like a serpent, now, from annoyance, he stung like a scorpion.

He told someone to bind that tall cypress from head to foot in his lasso.

Though it seemed that he had enchained that jessamine-breasted one, yet in secret his heart was attached to him with a hundred souls.

The king said: "This is enough. Which of us is the game in the lasso?"

Ayaz spoke and said: "O king, if thou cast me down a well for ever,

Or if thou cruelly shed my blood, thou shalt for ever be the game I caught."

The king said: "It is thou who art fallen into a snare. Why dost thou call me 'game'?"

The slave replied: "The body is the branch and the heart the root. I am in perfect union with thy pure heart.

If my body has fallen for a moment into thy snare, thy heart has fallen into my snare for ever.

If thou cut or burn my hair, yet thou shalt not thy own heart again even for a day.

[Ro. 102]

Know of a certainty that from hence forward the raven of my hair will

drink only the blood of thy heart.

Though thy wretched slave turn to dust yet shall that dust consume thy blood.

Though I perish or survive I shall always be the drinker of Maḥmūd's blood.

Since thy heart is always the game in my snare, I have my game always there.

If thou achieve perfection in the path thou followest it is impossible to free thy heart from my hand.

And if thou kill me I know how thou must needs kill thyself in bitter mourning for me.

If I live or not, in this path I am the beloved, the leader, the king.

But whether I am beggar or Chosroes,²⁹ whatever I am, I am thine." "

Discourse VIII

The son said: 'Tell me what magic is, for without my longing for it I cannot live.

When magic has become thus dear to me, why dost thou hold it so vile? Inform me of the secret of magic and then take me along with thee.'

Father's reply

The father opened the door of the treasury of words; he said to the son: 'O seeker of mysteries,

[*Ri. 127*]

(1) Story of Iblīs's child and Adam and Eve¹

Hakīm Tirmidhī* told this tale about Adam and Eve,

That having repented they came together and leaving Paradise chose a corner to live in.

Adam went out upon some errand and Satan the accursed ran up to Eve.

He had a child called Khannās; he gave it to Eve and went away.

When Adam returned and saw that child he was angry with Eve and asked:

"Why hast thou accepted it from Iblīs? Again thou hast been deluded by his lies."

[*Ro. 103*]

He killed the child and cut it to pieces; then took the pieces and scattered them in the desert.

When Adam had departed Iblīs returned again and with sorcery summoned that child.

His child came back all in pieces, the pieces joined together and the child reappeared.

When it was restored to life he pleaded with Eve until she took it back again.

When Iblīs had gone Adam returned and found his child there.

Again he scolded Eve, saying, "Wilt thou commit us once more to the flames?"

He killed the child, lit a fire and then burnt it over that fire.

He flung its ashes to the wind and then left Eve uttering imprecations.

Again black-faced Iblis returned and summoned that child of his from every side.

All the ashes returned and were joined together as that child.

When it was restored to life Iblis conjured Eve with many oaths, saying:

“Take my child and do not cast it once more to the wind.

I cannot leave it unattended; when I return I shall take it away.”

So he spoke and departed and Adam returned; again he was angered with the sight of Khannās.

[*Ri. 128*]

Once again he rebuked Eve, saying: “Again thou hast become the accomplice of the Devil.

I do not know what tyrannous Satan has in store for us now.”

So he spoke and again killed the child and then prepared a meal of it.

He ate that meal cheerfully together with Eve and departed upon some business, his heart filled with fire.

Again Iblis the Accursed returned and called that child of his in a loud voice.

When Khannās heard his cry he answered him from within Eve’s breast.

When the cunning Iblis heard his voice, he said: “Now all is possible to me.

This was always my aim, to place myself inside Adam.

Since I have planted myself inside him, his children too will be my helpless slaves.

Now, through Khannās, I shall set in the breasts of men a hundred snares that will involve them through temptation in ignominy.

Now I shall arouse a hundred different kinds of lust within them and shall enter their veins like blood.

Now I shall specially call him to worship and shall demand in that worship hypocrisy, not sincerity.

I shall employ thousands of different kinds of magic to lead mankind away from the Road.”—

[*Ro. 104*]

When Satan took up abode inside thee, sat there as Sultan and set up his throne,

He strengthened thy striving after magic so that thy soul craved for it.

Were not Satan such a brigand, he would not be Sultan over men and women.

He has brought sorrow upon many people: he has cast the whole world into confusion.

In every corner he has put a heart to sleep, everywhere he has put mud in the water.

He waylays thee and from the pain of that act thy eyes have on that account rained blood like a cloud.

[*Ri. 129*]

If Adam, for looking at a single grain,³ had to weep for three hundred years,

Consider how many tears Iblis must shed in his state of accursedness and jealousy.'

(2) Story of Iblis and his lamentation⁴

'A man without peer said: "On a desert road I saw two streams of black water flowing.

I continued along them to find out what water was this that flowed so rapidly;

When finally I came to a rock I beheld Iblis lying on the ground.

His eyes were like two blood-gushing clouds; a stream of blood flowed from either eye.

Like rain he wept and lamented; he kept repeating these words again and again:

'My plight is not because of that Moon-like face, but the colour of my cloak is black.

They do not wish me to obey and then they put the blame on my shoulders.' "—

Who ever suffered like this? No one remembers the like of it ever.'

(3) Story of Joseph and Benjamin⁵

'A saint said: "When Joseph decided to open his heart to Benjamin, Becoming one at heart with him, secluded privately with him alone, For that purpose he placed a cup in his sack and accused him of stealing it. How strange an act!"

That great one of the faith continued: "Exactly in the same way did God behave towards Iblis.

He drove him from His door and for the sake of this secret distinguished him by his curse from all the world.

He clad him in the robe of His wrath in order to hide him in His wrath from the eyes of the people.

[*Ri. 130*]

He stands always at the threshold of this Court, holding in his hand a weapon fashioned from that wrath.

Unless thou first pray for protection thou shalt not set foot in the Court of God.

He stands at that door day and night in order to belabour the draggle-tailed.

In his hand he holds the touchstone of men's coin; from East to West all stand in ranks before him.

Whoever brings false coin to that place is struck at once by Iblis's sickle.

To the bringer of the coin Iblis says: 'O thou who hast defeated me in falseness,

In half an hour God threw back in my face many thousands of years of worship.

But thou art pleased with this one atom of worship and offerest it to God and art not ashamed.

Though the people of the world may curse me, yet the love in my soul does not become an atom less.' —

If one single person curses thee, thou wilt collapse from misery within a single hour.

First, like a man, become a man of the Road, then only sacrifice thy life and appear before the King.

Why is Iblis despicable in thy sight, Iblis who with his trickery waylaid the great?

Know of a certainty that the emirs that now are, who have severed the head of a thousand persons like thee,

Though they are kings over thee, are but beggars in the train of the Sultan.

If thy king be a beggar of the Devil, how shouldst thou then follow the path of Islam?

Not for one moment is Iblis free from this burning: learn manliness from the accursed Iblis.⁶

For on the field of manliness he played the man; he accepted as fitting whatever came to him from God.'

(4) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz⁷

'Ayaz was seated with the victorious king, rubbing his feet until day-break.

[*Ri.* 131]

Every moment he increased his devotion to his master, for as he rubbed his feet he kissed them also.

Said Maḥmūd to the silver-breasted Ayaz: "What is the purpose of thy kissing my feet?"

Of all the seven members⁸ why shouldst kiss the feet? Thou hast, alas, neglected the other members.

When thou seest the value of the face, why dost thou prefer the humble foot?"

[*Ro. 106*]

Ayaz replied: "It is a strange matter. All mankind have their share of thy face,

For they all see thy moon-like countenance; but none has access to thy feet.

Since here there is no other than we, our intimacy is greater, and this I must have for my own."—

So it was also with Iblis, who sought before all else the wrath of God.

Many he saw seeking His kindness, but he sought after His wrath.

Since he alone was seeking the wrath of God, in manliness he prevailed over many a man.

Since he was accused before the True Face he girt his loins and at once stood firm.

Since the curse was the robe of honour bestowed on His Court, as it came from that Court, he valued it greatly.

Because of that curse he became the adversary of man and woman, he waylaid many of the people of the world.

Had he not drawn sustenance from that curse, how would he have exercised such power over mankind?

Since he was pleased with that curse, he asked for respite; he chose it with his soul and asked for eternal life.

For that robe of honour, until it was taken back from him, he would live in ease a long life:

To no one [else] was the curse to appear, but he chose the collar of the curse.

That curse from God was to him a source of sustenance while to others it was death itself.'

(5) Story of the handsome boy and the distracted lover⁹

'There was a beauteous ravisher of hearts, whose face caused the garden to perspire.

[*Ri. 132*]

One spring he had remained in the desert, alone in a tent.

His tent was like a splendid firmament, for under that tent was another sun.

A young man's glance happened to fall on him and for love of him his heart lost its way.

So firmly was he bound in his love that no one's advice was of avail to him.

He could not bear to be absent one moment from his beauty and yet had no hope of their being together.

Such was the fortune that favours lovers that one day the rain began to fall.

All the desert-dwellers ran and took shelter in their tents.

By chance that lover and his heart-ravishing beloved found themselves together in that same tent.

When the rain increased beyond all bounds everyone took shelter under covers.

[Ro. 107]

Under that tent then those two lovers got under a single cover.

With their eyes they stole each other's souls, and with their lips they refreshed them.

Every anguished soul offered up a prayer, saying,

"O God, slacken the rain for a while."

But the lover said: "O God, increase it as much as Thou wilt, do not slacken it.

Now that a deluge is pouring from the clouds, if I launch my ship, now is the time.

There has been so great a drought of friends that there is no dampness now from the rain.

If it rain from now till Judgement Day, my resurrection will be made possible from very joy.

O God, make that bliss reality: let the rain increase all the time."—

When God willed what He willed for the accursed Iblis, he asked God to increase it further.

Because God spoke to him without intermediary, therefore he speaks so much of himself.

[Ri. 133]

When that accursed one received the command to prostrate himself, he closed the eye that beheld the Way.

They said to him: "Prostrate thyself." He answered: "Before no other." They said to him: "Begone!" He answered: "No matter.

Though I should bring a curse on myself, how should I bow my head to another than He?¹⁰

If I cast one glance at another than He, my rule would not extend from the Moon to the Fish." ¹¹

(6) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz at the time of Maḥmūd's death¹²

'When Maḥmūd the World-Ruler was departing from this deceitful world

He asked for the silver-breasted Ayaz that he might speak a word to him face to face.

They said to him: "There remains but one moment of thy life—dost thou still wish to speak with Ayaz?"

He answered: "If he be not beside me always, what should he do alone?

If my heart must be illuminated by him, it is for such a day as this.

Any love that is not eternal is but a single mote, even though it be the sun itself.

Since my love for him is a love beyond compare it is Ayaz that I must have for that other world."

He sent finally for the silver-breasted Ayaz and secretly whispered these words in his ear:

[*Ro. 108*]

"Sweet friend, by thy covenant with the Lord I beg thee, when the coffin has become Maḥmūd's cradle,

That thou mayst never gird thy lions before any other, for this would displease me even though it pleased thee."

Ayaz replied: "If I had been an eater of carrion, I should not have hunted game like Maḥmūd—wouldst thou consider me an eater of carrion?

Since I can bind Maḥmūd with a single hair of my head, I have not the heart to gird my loins before another.

As long as Ayaz, thy intimate, is alive, all will be well in the end."

[*Ri. 134*]

When Iblīs was cursed by God, he opened his mouth in praise and glorification,

Saying: "To be cursed by Thee is a hundred times better than to turn from Thee to others."

If a dog be driven with blows from the door, it will remain deprived of bones for ever.

What do I say? When he heard that curse, in the curse he saw only Him that uttered it.

He that has drunk clear wine for thousands of years, not in small draughts but draining brimfull beakers,

When he comes finally in one single draught to drink the lees, how shall he forget the wine?

Although he drank the lees of the curse, he saw in that curse only the Cupbearer.

Having for thousands of years seen the Cupbearer in the wine, how should he see another in the lees?

Since the curse came to him from that Court and since his name was cursed by that Presence,

He did not see whether it was good or evil, he only saw that it came from the Court of God.

Since the curse was a coat of honour from the Court of God, he accepted it with heart and soul, and that was all.'

(7) Story of the thief whose hand was cut off¹³

'They cut off the hand of a thief. He breathed not a word but took up his hand and made off.

They said to him: "O unhappy wretch, what wilt thou do with that severed hand?"

He answered: "I had in all sincerity engraved on it the name of a dear friend.

Henceforth, as long as I live, this is enough for me, for without it I cannot live.

Though I have suffered only pain from this hand, yet since my friend's name is on it, I care not."—

Since the accursed Iblis knew all the mysteries, if he would not prostrate himself it was for this reason,

[*Ri. 135*]

That he begrudged mankind a share in those mysteries. Therefore he refused to prostrate himself and began his revolt,

[*Ro. 109*]

So that neither he nor mankind might see that door or that threshold

And that the light behind the veil of majesty might never be polluted by the eyes of man.'

(8) Story of the Moon and her jealousy of the Sun¹⁴

'Thou hast not heard how they asked the Moon, saying, "What dost thou most desire?"

She answered: "I wish that the sun might be eclipsed so that he would be forever behind a veil.

I wish him to be always hidden in the clouds, for I begrudge my own eyes the sight of him."'

(9) Question put by a man to Majnūn¹⁵

‘A friend said to the distracted Majnūn: “Lailā is dead.” He answered: “Praise be to God!”

Said the friend: “O impious one, since thou burnest for love of her, why dost thou speak thus?”

He answered: “Since I have had no share of that moonlike one, let no man of ill will enjoy her either.” ’

(10) Story of Iblīs¹⁶

‘Someone questioned Iblīs, saying, “O ill-omened one, since thou knowest that thou art accursed,

Why hast thou stored up the curse in thy soul and concealed it in thy heart like a treasure?”

He answered: “The curse is the King’s shaft, but first He must take aim:

First his glance must fall on the target before the arrow is discharged from the bow.

Now thou art aware only of the arrow. If thou have eyes look at the glance also.” ’

[*Ri.* 136]

(11) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the wishes made by his nobles¹⁷

‘Nobles who rubbed their heads against the firmament were assembled in the presence of Maḥmūd.

The king of the world turned towards them and said: “Let each one of you make a wish.”

That day they asked the king for many things: towns, wealth, property, office, rank.

[*Ro.* 110]

When the turn came to Ayaz someone said: “O thou who art peerless in beauty and the companion of all talents,

What wish dost thou make?” He answered: “But one thing and beyond that I do not wish for anything.

I wish always all the time that I may be the target of the king’s arrow.

If this wish is granted me then nothing will ever go awry.”

They said to him: “O unfortunate one, deprived through ignorance of wisdom,

Wilt thou trample wisdom underfoot that thou wishest thyself to be the king's target?

Why dost thou wish thy body to be a target so that thou becomest the eternal prisoner of the arrow?"

Ayaz replied: "O men, you are not informed of this mystery.

Though the whole world were to venerate me, yet it is enough for me to be the target of the king's arrow.

For first he must several times cast a glance at the target and then only shoot the arrow.

Since that glance will come first how will it be difficult to bear the wound that comes afterwards?

You see that wound upon its way, but I see only that glance bestowed by the king.

If he first cast ten glances upon me, how shall I then flee in fear of one wound?"

[Ri. 137]

(12) Story of Shibli¹⁸

'When Shibli's madness became excessive, he was bound in chains by force.

A crowd of people came to him by chance and stood in the roadway looking at him.

Shibli, the maker of words, said to them: "What kind of people are you? Come, tell me your secret."

They all said: "We are thy friends, for we know of no way but that of friendship."

When Shibli heard these words from his friends he began to pelt them with stones.

Seeing the stones all his friends fled in fear thereof.

Then Shibli opened his mouth and said: "Liars and misguided wretches that you are,

When you boasted to me of your friendship, you were not, O base ones, sincere.

Who flees from the blows of a friend, for they are not blows after all but proofs of his loving kindness?"—

When Iblis was struck by the Friend he did not flee, but prepared a hundred balms out of his blows.¹⁹

[Ro. 111]

Accept with all thy soul every blow that He deals, for though He strike at thy life yet His blow is good.

If thou have but an atom of love thou wilt give a hundred lives for His blow.

Thou thinkest that His blow costs nothing, yet its price is thousands of years of worship.

Though one were to perform thousands of years of worship, it would pay the price of one single hour of His curse.

Thou deservest to be separated if it is said to thee, "Thou art not worthy of Us."

Listen, dear friend, to the story of Iblīs; forsake thy deceit for a while and listen.

If for a time thou practisest such valour, thou canst at any moment bring a whole world back to life.

Though cursed and rejected from the Road yet Iblīs is always in the presence of the King.

Why dost thou curse him night and day? Rather learn from him how to be a Muslim.'

[*Ri. 138*]

(13) Story of Moses on Mount Sinai with Iblīs²⁰

'One night Moses was walking on Mount Sinai, when Iblīs appeared before him from afar.

He said to that accursed one: "Why, O friend, wouldst thou not prostrate thyself before Adam?"

The accursed one replied: "O thou who art favoured by God, I was rejected without reason by the Almighty.

Had I been allowed to make that prostration, I should have been, like thee, a familiar of God.

But since God so willed it—how can I say otherwise?—it was not to be."

Said Moses: "O thou who art cast in bonds, dost thou ever think of God?"

The accursed one replied: "How should I forget His kindness for a single moment?

For the more He hates me the more love there is in my breast for Him."

Though by the curse he is banished far away from the Court, yet in the words of Moses, he is in God's presence.

Although He that had inflamed his heart cursed him, by that curse his ardour was further increased.—

Satan was thus ardent upon the road he followed—how much dost thou, O son, love the object of thy desire?

If today thou wouldst have magic, rejoice in being cursed, and O if thou canst not learn,

Consider how long Hārūt and Mārūt²¹ were left hanging upside down without food or water.

[Ro. 112]

They are imprisoned in that well with bleeding hearts, despairing of their fate.

Though they are the masters of their time, both without equal in the art of magic,

Since they cannot set themselves free how shall anyone rejoice in that science?

If thou have a whole world of magic, a rod will at once become a crocodile and swallow it all up.²²

Since so much magic was consumed in a rod, only a worthless man will consume himself in magic.

There is always a devil in thy breast who is drunk with the desire for magic.

[Ri. 139]

If thy devil becomes a Muslim, thy magic will become divine knowledge and thy unbelief belief.

Thou wilt become for ever a denizen of Paradise, and Satan will of his own free will prostrate himself before thee.

Now I have explained to thee what is lawful magic, whereby thou mayst attain to eternal perfection.

Since thou canst concern thyself with such magic, thou must do so and no longer pursue that other magic.'

Discourse IX

The third son came, endowed with many a perfection, and at once described to his father his state of mind.

'There is a cup which has the property of displaying the whole world.¹ I wish to possess that cup, I do not wish for sovereignty.

I have heard that that cup is such that whatever thou seekest is revealed in it.

If there are many hidden secrets that cup will show them all to thee.

I know not how beautiful a mirror that is wherein there appears the picture of the whole world everywhere.

Though thou hadst to do with a whole world of secrets, it would in an instant make them all as clear as day.

Could I lay my hands on such a cup, the firmament, for all its loftiness, would seem to me low and mean.

The secrets of the universe would be revealed to me—I, ignoramus as I am, should know many things.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'Ignorance has vanquished thee. Thou desirest this cup In order that, when thou art informed of every secret, thou mayst lord it over the whole world.

[*Ro. 113*]

When, through such power thou seest thyself exalted into the heavens and the people of the earth plunged into a well,

[*Ri. 140*]

From pride in thy power thou wilt be filled with thyself and wilt remain for ever in a state of vainglory.

Ever though thou hold before thee the cup of Jamshīd, wherein thou mayst see every single atom as plainly as the sun,

What though thou seest every atom in that cup? When Death sets his saw upon thy head,

Like Jamshīd thou shalt have no profit from that cup, for like Jamshīd thou too shalt perish miserably in the end.²

Since to have this cup is to fall in the well, see it that thou do not stray from the Road.'

(1) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the old woman³

'The Sultan of the Faith, Maḥmūd the Conqueror, was riding swiftly on his Arab horse at the head of his army.

Somewhere on the roadside he saw a widow who had fastened a petition on the end of a staff.

She sued for justice against the tyrannous and sought help of that help-giver.

When the mighty king saw that old woman he paid her no attention but hurried on his way.

That night Maḥmūd dreamt that he had fallen into the whirling waters of a well.

That same old woman appeared and turned her staff round for him.

She said to him: "Lay hold, O king, and rise from the bottom of this whirlpool and well."

The king caught of the old woman's staff and so escaped with ease from that well of calamity.

The next day he was sitting on his throne, heavy of heart because of his dream of the night before,

When again he saw the forlorn old woman approaching from afar to seek justice,

With staff in hand and bowed of back, her eye moist as a cloud from weeping.

The king leapt up and called her to sit down beside him.

Then he said to his troops: "Had it not been for her, last night the crocodile of death would have carried me off.

[*Ri.* 141]

By giving me her staff to hang upon she saved me from the whirlpool and the well.

If you too wish today to have victory from God for ever,

All of you lay hold of her staff, for that will support you always."

[*Ro.* 114]

The soldiers fell over one another as they rushed forward and took firm hold of that staff

And all the time great crowds came in from every side to touch the staff.

Whilst the old woman sat on the throne beside the king holding that staff in her hand,

And holding it out as a support for which many eagerly vied with one another.

Like Moses she drew strength from that staff which wrought for the Faith like the staff of Moses.

The king said to her: "O poor old woman, thou art very feeble and there are so many people.

Weak as thou art, how canst thou with a piece of wood support so great a burden?

Many are pulling against you. Thou canst not carry all of this load."

The old woman opened her mouth and said: "O king, whoever can pull Maḥmūd out of a well can support the weight of anyone. Thy words cannot be admitted.

Whoever can pull an elephant out of a well, how should he hold back from a handful of gnats?"—

Since those who confer power there are men of little account and it is women that give support to the king,

Why be proud thereof and glory in what is insignificant?

Why raise an outcry on account of every mean wretch and suffer harm at the hands of every base creature?

Why boast of others and not thyself and listen to the words 'I am nobler' uttered by every base fellow who is not so?⁴

Thou dost not know what lies before thee, therefore it is that thou takest care of thy beard.

[*Ri.* 142]

If thou tiest thy turban like the letter *lām-alif*,⁵ it would be much better if thou put on the *zunnār*.⁶

For when thou tiest thy turban like *lām-alif*, it is the *lām-alif* of the Cross and the *zunnār*.

Thy heart is not yet aware of this turban before thou findest thyself laid out in thy coffin,

And since thy head is the repository of vain imaginings, the head of the coffin is a fitting place for thy turban.

Of what use is it to wind fine muslin around thy head when soon thou shalt be wrapped in a winding-sheet?

Squat comfortably scissors-like in this world, for thou shalt receive thy deserts from the scissors of the fire.

Why dost thou make power and wealth thy companions, for they will accompany thee only until thy last breath.

Since nothing of thine will remain, why twist and turn upon thyself like a winding-sheet?

[*Ro.* 115]

(2) Story of Buhlūl and the cemetery⁷

'Buhlūl had a stick which he was striking against the tombs until it broke.

They said to him: "O thou tormented one, why dost strike these tombs with a stick?"

He answered: "These departed ones uttered lies without number and then went to sleep.

This one said: 'My palace and my pavilion'. That one said: 'My goods and my gold'.

This one said: 'Behold my fields and my vineyards'. That one said: 'Behold my garden and my water tank'.

But God said: 'All these claims are not lawful, for it is all my inheritance, it is not yours.'

When they had all said their say they departed and bade farewell to their lives.

Therefore I beat them without pause for food or sleep, for they are nothing but a handful of liars.

Since in the end they had to leave it all, what did it profit them to think it was theirs?"—

[*Ri. 143*]

Why gather together such things which in the end it will grieve one to abandon?

Why set thy heart on a world which in the end will make bricks out of thy clay?

The world, like a caravanserai, has two doors: from one door to the other is a passage like *Sirāṭ*.⁸

If thou do not follow that passage carefully thou wilt fall headlong into hell.

When a shadow falls over the earth it darkens the moon in blackness.

Although the body of the moon is very bright, yet there is black water in front of it from the earth.

Since such is the action of the earth upon the moon, what can he do who is immersed in the earth?

Since it can in a single instant blacken so bright a light, it will in the course of a lifetime ruin thee also.

Thou shalt be ruined and there is no hope that thou mayst be saved, for that is impossible.

Thy ruin will be beyond measure, for every disaster that overtakes thy soul is brought upon it by thyself.

And the deed which has this effect thou wilt have wrought with thy own hand: this is clear beyond doubt.'

(3) Story of the king who knew astrology⁹

'A certain king knew astrology well. He ascertained that at such-and-such an hour in such-and-such a month

[*Ro. 116*]

He would find himself helpless in the clutches of some disaster. He constructed a building of stone.

When he had completed that house of hard rock he sent for many guards to keep watch over it.

Upon entering that house he saw that there was an opening through which light penetrated into it.

With his own hand he stopped the opening and was left alone imprisoned in the house.

There was no way out and he was at his wit's end: and when he could no longer breathe he died.—

If thou wish to advance with every pace thou takest, thou must of necessity bid farewell to self,

[*Ri. 144*]

And if thou will not bid farewell to self and the world, when death comes, thou must, whether thou wilt or not.

Since sleeping and eating do not continue for ever, when death comes what will thou do ?

(4) Story¹⁰

“Thus said a man of pure essence: “If someone is summoned to God, Thou mournest for him on the first day and the second and the third.

Until the seventh day thou art anguished with mourning; when the seventh day is past, what wilt thou do on the eighth?”—

Since on the last day thou must resign thyself, why twist and turn? Receive instruction now on the first day.

Even though thy whole body becomes feet like a snake's there is no place to which thou canst escape.

Hast thou not seen that when a snake is moving it twists and coils along the road ?

But when it approaches its hole, there is no more crookedness in it, it is like a hair of thy head.

For unless it abandons its twisting it will never make its way into the hole.

Thou too, if thou eschew crookedness, the Road because of its straightness will bring thee to thy hole.

If in blindness thou hast gone astray thou wilt remain like the blind, on the outside of the curtain;

Thou wilt see neither men's feet nor their heads; afflicted with blindness thou wilt be left at the door.

Straight as the letter *alif* in the Kûfic script,¹¹ so must be the sight of the Šūfī.

What is Şūfism? To rest in patience and to forsake all desire of the world.

What is trust in God? To bridle the tongue and to wish better things for others than for oneself;

[Ro. 117]

To become annihilated, to renounce life, to reject all else and to choose that.'

[Ri. 145]

(5) Story of Shaqīq of Balkh and his words about trust in God¹²

'Shaqīq of Balkh, that learned shaikh, was lecturing in Baghdad.

He spoke fine words concerning trust in God, words that in sublimity were loftier than the celestial spheres.

He said to the people: "Be strong in your trust in God and do not fear abasement.

I for my part travelled in the desert, glad of heart; I put my trust in God, and travelled free from care.

All the wealth and property I had with me was one dirhem which I had in my pocket.

Since in my coming and going my heart is turned to the Unseen I still have that dirhem in my pocket.

I visited the Ka'ba and joyfully returned having had no need for that dirhem."

An eager-faced young man sprang up and said to him: "Listen to just one thing.

In the moment in which thou puttest that dirhem in thy pocket, where was then the trust of thy soul in the Unseen?

Where was thy trust in God when this dirhem involved thee in a hundred doubts?

Wert thou not then a believer? Or if thou wert, wert thou not secure in thy belief?"

When Shaqīq heard these words of his, he trembled in his pulpit.

He gave him his due, saying: "This is manifest proof. What can I say? The young man is right."—

This divan will not hold a single dirhem, nay, it will not hold a single hair.

Much blood did he shed whose head was turned by God and he has been cruelly slain by His hand.

Let him be in the midst of dust and blood, for such is the cosmetic that he now needs.

A strange thing that this dervish does! He uses his own blood as a cosmetic.

A strange thing that until he is dead he has not a shirt to cover his body!

[*Ri. 146*]

(6) Story of the madman who asked God for a piece of linen¹³

A distracted madman rose up: he was naked and asked God for a piece of linen,

[*Ro. 118*]

Saying: "O God, I have no shirt on my body, and if Thou hast patience I have none."

A voice came to that madman saying, "I will give thee a piece of linen but it will be thy winding-sheet."

That tormented madman opened his mouth and said: "I know of Thee, O provider for Thy servants,

That Thou wilt never give a poor wretch a piece of linen until after he is dead.

First he must die penniless and naked, and then he receives a piece of linen from Thee in the grave."—

O heart, if thou art slain upon this road, thou wilt become alive again in one instant.

Since thou art bleeding from head to foot, drown thyself in thy own blood in the midst of the dust.

When milk comes to a woman the blood of her courses is arrested in its flow.

Her blood is secretly changed so that thou drinkest blood and thinkest it to be milk.

Since thou didst begin by drinking blood and wilt end by being brought to the dust,

Someone who finds himself between dust and blood, how shall he raise his head in pride when it is bowed in humility?

If thou, who art nothing, knowest what thou art, thou art a handful of dust and blood mixed together.

Only then wilt thou be cleansed of blood and dust if thou drink blood until thou becomest dust.

Since thy life is nought but tears and sorrow, His locks will one day cast their shadow upon thee.'

(7) Story of the madman who was shedding tears¹⁴

'A madman was shedding floods of tears. Someone said to him: "Why art thou weeping so bitterly?"'

"Let me tell thee," he said, "I shed blood in order that some time His heart may have pity on me."

[*Ri. 147*]

Someone said: "He has no heart. Whoever says so is not in his right mind."

The madman answered: "He has all hearts always.

It is a wonderful thing that He should have all hearts. How should *He* not have a heart? What language is this?"—

Everything here is from *there*: evil and good, noble and base, it is all from there.

Therefore these hearts of ours are from there also, and I mean not only our hearts but everything.

If good and evil appear to thee as two miracles, the tradition thereof may be learnt from there.

Consider why Gabriel changed dust into blood when he overthrew the people of the Sāmīrī;¹⁵

But when a breath from him entered Mary,¹⁶ from the Spirit of God¹⁷ there came the Life of the World.

Know that good and evil here are from there; if there is weal it is from there, woe is from there.

Thou art ignorant of pure sanctity because thou art confined in the straits of water and dust.

If thou escape from this ruined place thou wilt be a treasure concealed in a ruin,

And though thou be sad of heart here below, yet through thy heart thou art joined to God.'

(8) Story of Shaikh Abū Bakr Wāsiṭī and the madman¹⁸

'There came upon Wāsiṭī a wakening of the spirit and early one morning he entered a madhouse.

He saw a madman crazy with excitement now giving a yell and now clapping his hands together.

Dancing he leapt for joy like rue seeds cast upon the fire.

Said Wāsiṭī to him: O thou who art far from the road, subdued in heavy bonds.

Since thou art thus shackled, why this joyfulness? Being a slave, why dost thou feel so free?"

The madman opened his mouth and thus addressed the shaikh: "If my feet are now in shackles,

[*Ri. 148*]

My heart is not and that is the essential part of me: when my heart is free that is union with God.

Know of a certainty that it is a very difficult thing that my heart should be free when my feet are bound."—

What are the two worlds? A sea whose name is heart. And thou art in a sea, thy feet sunk in the mud.

Enter for a while the sea of thy breast that thou mayst see a whole world hidden within thyself.

Since a hundred worlds are concealed inside thy heart, what importance will a hundred worlds have in thy eyes?

Know that earth and heaven are there, for thou art both this world and the next.

I do not know how, when the world is manifest within thee, thou canst look at a place which is only transitory.

If thou wish to have a world for thyself it will be created in a moment by that [inward] power.

The world to thee is composed of humours and causes, its seven climes encircled by seven seas.

[*Ro. 120*]

In that world the bird does not come from the egg, palaces from stone nor houris from menses.

There honey does not come from the bee, nor milk from the goat, nor wine from the grape.

It is not the fire that produces the roast fowl, nor is it by cooking that the various dishes are prepared.

Since intermediaries are absent there, all of this is produced out of nothing.

Whatsoever thou desirest is realised by thy mere wish.

Do not look upon thyself with the eye of contempt; do not think that the two words are other than thy soul and body.

Thou art everything. Why fear the fire so much? Thy heart is the empyrean and thy breast the firmament.¹⁹

Since thy heart is ablaze here with love of Him, how shalt thou burn in the fire of hell?

[*Ri. 149*]

(9) Story of the old woman with the burnt heart²⁰

'One day in the market of Baghdad there broke out an extremely destructive fire.

At once a cry arose from the people; a tumult emerged out of that fire.

A poor afflicted old woman, staff in hand, came along the road from some direction.

Someone said to her: "Go on further, thou art mad; the fire has reached thy house."

The woman answered: "It is thou who art mad, hold thy peace, for

God will never burn my house."

Finally, when the fire had consumed a whole world of houses, it was found that the old woman's house had remained unscathed.

They said to her: "Tell us, good woman, how wast thou aware of such a mystery?"

The old woman humbly answered: "God could burn either my house or my heart.

Since He had already burnt my poor crazy heart with grief He would not burn my house also." '

(10) Story of the fire and the tinder²¹

'When flint and steel came together between them they produced a spark of fire.

There came along the tinder which lived by burning. The fire opened its mouth and said: "Who art thou?"

The tinder answered: "I have known thee long, my dear friend."

Said the fire: "My function is to provide light: thou art dark—how should there be any relationship between us?"

[Ro. 121]

At once the tinder gave an eloquent reply: "If I am dark, who made me so but the fire?"

Thou didst burn me with thy light and now thou sayest that thou dost not know me.

Just as I was cruelly burnt by thee, so now in thy kindness protect him that thou hast burnt."

When the fire recognised the weakness of the tinder, forsaking all the world it took it in its embrace.—

[Ri. 150]

If thou too art aglow with this same grief, since thou hast burnt here thou shalt not burn there.

For baked bricks, though they are born of the earth, yet they are born of fire also.

Since they are born of fire they are unfitted for the tombs of the faithful.²²

Since the Holy Law will not permit thee even this, never will it sanction thy being given to the fire.

If a lamp shines in the eyes of the meadow it straightway causes the jessamine to wither.

The lamp which shines from the door of God has a gentle light, and yet it is like the lamp which shines on the jessamine.

Although we live in hardship all our lives, who is more delicate or more

helpless then we?

If a rose petal were to fall upon us, thou wouldst see none more defenceless than we.'

(11) Story of Abū 'Alī Fārmadī²³

'A man of powerful soul and excellent understanding has recorded these words of Master Bū 'Alī of Fārmad:

"Tomorrow on the Judgment Day God will give a certain man his book and will say: 'Look and read.'

Having looked at that book for one or two hours the man will find recorded in it neither sins nor acts of devotion.

He will open his mouth and say: 'O God, there is nothing written in the book. What is it that thou wishest?'

There will come a Voice saying: 'I do not enter into a book the good and evil deeds of those that love Me.

The Almighty has made little account of thy good and evil deeds; thou canst for thy part make little account of heaven and hell.

When there is no longer any cause of dispute between us, thou belongest to Us and We to thee for ever.

And if thou do not wish this, why dost thou hesitate? We are all, We are all and thou art nothing.

And if thou behave like a wild animal thou wilt be given back thy book that thou mayst return to thyself.' "—

[*Ri. 151*]

Since we cannot bear the weight even of a rose-petal, and in the part there is not the life of the whole;

[*Ro. 122*]

And since our Leader himself was illiterate²⁴ He will not unjustly demand the reading of the book.

For if thou wert to engage in discussion of the book thou wouldst soon become familiar with its meaning.'

(12) Story of the sinner on Judgment Day²⁵

'There is a true tradition of the Prophet that God will say to a certain person on the Day of Judgment:

"Come, my servant, and read this book and learn what thou hast done throughout thy long life."

When the man has read the book from end to end he will find in it nothing but sins.

When he finds in that book nothing but blackness, he will open his mouth and say: "O God,

I shall go to hell as the punishment for such a life." And God will say to him: "Read on the back of the book."

When he quickly reads the back of the book he will find there written the final record:

"He has shown his repentance and all his pains have been cured.

For every evil act the Knower of Mysteries has allowed him ten good works.

Since he has repented God has recorded ten good works against every evil act."

When the man has read this he will rejoice. How glad is the slave who has been freed!

He will say to God: "Almighty Eternal, I have not had my due from the Recording Angels.

For I have committed many more sins than these, which those two vigilant ones have not recorded.

Tell them to record this against me, wretch that I am; let them erase those other sins and record these ones in their place,

So that for all the evil deeds I have wrought from the beginning Thou mayst allow me ten good works each.

Although I have died a great sinner yet by Thy grace I have put my sins to profit."

[*Ri. 252*]

The Prophet, having related these words and actions, burst into laughter so that he showed all his teeth.²⁶

Then he said: "O pure Creator, behold the insolence of a handful of dust!"—

If thou learn the secret that is within the pure soul, thou art in danger of destruction.

Who knows what this wondrous secret is or to what wonders this secret gives rise?

But all the difficulties which lie before thee are placed there because thou art nothing.

They were placed in thy pathway in order that thou mightest, if possible, become aware of thyself.

[*Ro. 123*]

Since thou art the object of His love He acted thus in order to hide thee from thy own and others' sight.

He set up thousands of curtains of intermediate causes and within them all He placed a bed.

Thou canst sleep alone with the Beloved upon the bed behind the curtains. O what fortune!

Since no part of the Beloved may be seen, it is best that this should be His place,

For it is never safe to displayed the Beloved, He must be concealed because of His preciousness.'

(13) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the review²⁷

'One day the Sultan of the Faith, Maḥmūd the Victorious, decided to review his army.

Ayaz was not there with him, and the grateful king sent for him.

He despatched someone after him with the message: "The king is waiting for you there.

Come, for there is a review of the army and the purpose of this review is to display thy moonlike face."

The king's messenger departed and delivered his message, and the silver-breasted Ayaz gave him his answer.

The man returned to Maḥmūd and the king said to him: "Hast thou not seen the face of the loved one?"

The man answered: "I saw him, and he will not come. I heard him answer he will not come.

[*Ri. 153*]

I said to him: 'Come because the victorious king will review his army today.'

He said to me: 'Tell the knavish king that no one ever reviews his beloved.

If he wishes to display me let him display me to himself and no one else.' " " "

[*Ri.* 154]

(1) Story of Sultan Sanjar⁴ and 'Abbāsa of Tūs⁵

'One day Sanjar, that noble king, came upon 'Abbāsa in a secluded spot.

They could make nothing of each other; and when the king had sat with him for a while he arose and departed.

Someone said to 'Abbāsa: "Why wert thou silent and didst neither speak nor listen?"

'Abbāsa answered: "When my gaze fell upon the king,

I saw a whole world of tough branches before me and in my hand a small and very blunt sickle.

I could cut nothing with that sickle and I had no choice but to remain silent."—

If thou rejoice in the glory of this world thou shalt be deprived of the glory of the world to come.

If thou gather about thee wealth and honour, thy wealth shall become a serpent and thy honour a pit.

What is thy heart but Moses and thy carnal desire but Pharaoh; the world with its hundred colours is a fiery brazier.

If Gabriel orders it it is pleasant for Moses to thrust his hand in the fire.

But if Pharaoh gives the command, the fire will torment thee in a hundred ways.

For if there has been some shortcoming in thy acts of devotion, each of thy limbs will bear witness against thee.

There thou shalt have neither belief nor unbelief: thou shalt have only what thou hast brought with thee from here.

[*Ro.* 125]

Thou wilt reap what thou hast sown here; thou wilt wear what thou hast spun here.

Thy weal or woe there will be what it was here.

Thou wilt find no joy there, dervish, except the joy that thou bringest with thee.⁶

If thou die with poison or with honey on thy lips, thou wilt have thy burden upon thy shoulders.

Every single atom of this world is a screen: if thou possess a single atom of it thou must render account for it.

With thy feet firmly planted and thy heart reeling like the compass, do not be sluggish but go gaily onward.'

[*Ri. 155*]

(2) Moses' colloquy with God and his asking to meet one of His saints?

"The world-adorning Kalīm said to God: "Show me one of Thy friends So that my eye may be gladdened by the sight of his face, for my heart burns with longing to see him."

There came a Voice saying: "There is in such-and-such a valley a man who is filled with true devotion for Us.

He is one of the nobles of Our Court; day and night he walks in Our Way."

Kalīm set out to visit that man: he found him absorbed in the worship of God,

His head resting upon half a brick, clad in a garment of rough wool that barely reached to his knees.

Thousands of ants, wasps and flies were gathered around him, before and behind.

Moses greeted him and said: "Tell me if there is anything thou desirest."

The man replied: "O Prophet of God, make haste and give me a drink of water from thy pitcher."

While Moses went to fetch his pitcher, the soul of that thirsty man suddenly departed from his body.

When Moses the Pure brought him the water he found him lying dead, his face in the dust.

Kalīm Allāh marvelled at this and he arose to prepare his winding-sheet and his grave.

When he returned the man's body had been torn to pieces by a lion: it had devoured his heart and so stilled its hunger.

Moses' heart boiled with grief: his own grief was greatly increased because of that man.

He opened his mouth and said: "O Knower of Secrets with a hundred acts of kindness, Thou hast tended a piece of clay.

Where can one find the clue to this mystery? Neither the heart has seen Thy secret nor the soul comprehended it."

[*Ro. 126*]

God's answer reached the ear of his soul. "Since I have always given him water,

[*Ri. 156*]

It is best that now too that wretch should drink water from My hand.

Since I have always given him clothing, why should Moses now interfere?

Now that an intermediary has appeared, why has he turned his attention to others?

When he had received favours from such as We, why should he seek favours of another?

When another intervened We snatched him away for ever.

But until he gives a clear account of that woollen garment and piece of brick

We swear by the majesty of Our rank not a trace of Our aura shall reach him from any direction.”—

Friend, it is not easy to have dealings with Him, one can speak to Him only through the heart and soul.

And since one speaks with Him through the heart and soul it is difficult to speak of the things of this world.

Unless a man can trample upon his soul he cannot be accounted a man.

Do not consider the celestial sphere as a man in the ranks of His host: it is an old woman turning her spinning-wheel.

When thou hast a hundred bonds with all manner of things, how many bonds hast thou with thy origin?

Since so many crocodiles pull at thee here, how dost thou hope to abide in Heaven?

Since the chains of the earth are on thy feet, how shalt thou find a place in the firmament?

Since thou hast given thy affection to a pack of dogs, what dost thou expect from the denizens of Heaven?

What have the Recording Angels in their pure sanctity to do with this ball of earth?

The beauty which those noble ones may gaze upon—what place has it amongst the inhabitants of the privy?

Not every soul has access to that mystery, not everyone, my son, attains to that honour.

Thousands of souls enter the world before a single soul penetrates this secret.’

(3) Story of the state of souls before the creation of bodies⁸

‘It is said that the period of time when souls had been created but not yet bodies

Was some three or four years, each year of that world being equal to a thousand of ours.

The tradition is that those lofty souls at that time when they were devoid of bodies

[Ro. 127]

Were all assembled together and drawn up in ranks.

Then all at once to the left of the souls the world came into their view.

When those souls all beheld the world, with heart and soul they rushed towards it.

And to those souls that were left behind Paradise appeared upon the right.

When these souls beheld Paradise (O marvel!) they shrank back with all their might from hell.

A few remained where they stood, having no mind to go in any direction.

They chose neither the world nor Paradise, nor were they frightened in the slightest by hell. There came a Voice saying: "O foolish souls, what do you seek here now?"

You are indifferent to the world and to Paradise and you are not troubled by hell.

What do you require upon Our path that has bound you to Our Court?"

A cry arose from all those souls, it was as though their lives were coming to an end:

"O Lord of the Empyrean, the Earth and the Firmament, since Thou art wiser than we, why dost Thou ask?"

It is Thou that we desire and nothing else; Thou art certain truth and all else is nothing."

There came a Voice saying: "If it is We you desire you desire all manner of calamities,

As many as there are hairs on the hide of an animal or grains of sand in the desert from end to end,

[*Ri. 158*]

Or as many as drops of rain or leaves of branchy trees.

More than this I will pour down without mercy upon you all manner of toils and tribulations.

I will make many thousands of fiery caltrops and will place them all of the time against your wounded breasts."

When those souls heard the voice of God, they shouted for joy saying:

"May our lives be sacrificed to those calamities, do with us whatever Thou wilt.

We shall welcome these trials from Thee; we shall begin an eternal life."—

He shares a secret with every soul and every soul imagines

That it alone possesses the secret of that Court and it alone is informed of the secret of knowledge.

It is well that the souls think as they do, but only one amongst them does He love.

[*Ro. 128*]

The others are so many curtains before that soul; they are wounded for its sake.

Eighteen thousand were beheaded⁹ when Moses was led to the Way.

Although all souls share the same quality, yet His chosen ones are the people of knowledge.'

(4) Story of the wives of the Prophet¹⁰

One day the wives of Muṣṭafā¹¹ asked him all together: "O leader of the world,

Whom dost thou love most amongst us? We should be pleased if thou wouldst tell us."

The Prophet answered: "O heart-inflaming company, you must be patient today,

And tomorrow I will tell you what I think; I will answer you all if I can."

When the night had grown as dark as the day of separation he called each of them to him separately.

He gave each wife in secret a signet ring; he gave her also a balsam to use in case of need.

[*Ri.* 159]

From each he exacted a promise that she would not tell the others about the ring,

That she would conceal that secret behind the curtain and let no word of it come out therefrom.

Finally on the next day those women came before the Prophet.

Again they asked him for his reply and he opened his mouth saying:

"I love her most in all the world to whom I have secretly given a signet ring."

When the wives heard these words, they each of them rejoiced without the knowledge of the others.

They looked at one another but none of course was aware of that secret.

Each of them separately had her secret, but with 'Ā'isha the case was different.—

If thy heart desires, O helpless one, to be admitted behind the curtain, take care,

Drink of the blood of thy liver and yet rejoice; be free from care while thy heart is bleeding.

For unless thou drink thy heart's blood in separation thou shalt not find the way to the secret of knowledge.'

(5) Story of Rābi'a¹²

'For a whole week the saintly Rābi'a had taken no food.

[Ro. 129]

During that week she never sat down but prayed and fasted continuously.

When hunger had weakened her legs and utterly exhausted all her limbs and members,

A woman who lived near her happened to bring her a bowl of food.

Rābi'a, in pain and suffering as she was, went to fetch a lamp.

When she returned it chanced that a cat had knocked the bowl upon the ground.

Again she departed to fetch a pitcher and break her fast with water.

The pitcher fell from her hand: she was still thirsty and the pitcher was broken.

[Ri. 160]

That disconsolate one heaved such a sigh that it was as though the whole world had been consumed with fire.

In utter bewilderment she cried: "O God, what wilt Thou of this poor helpless creature?"

Thou hast cast me into confusion—how long wilt Thou cause me to welter in my blood?"

There came a Voice saying: "If thou so wish I will this very moment bestow upon thee all that lies between the Moon and the Fish.

But I shall remove from thy heart the grief that thou hast borne for so many years for My sake. Consider this well.

For not in a hundred years will suffering for Me and this deceitful world meet together in a single heart.

If thou wouldst always suffer for Me thou must forsake the world forever.

Hast thou the one thou canst not hope for the other, for suffering for God is not to be had without paying for it." '

(6) Story of Buhlūl¹³

"That madman Buhlūl of Baghdad was cruelly treated at the hands of small boys,

Who kept pelting him with stones and making him run in every direction.

When he could endure it no longer he picked up a small stone from the road and offered it to them.

"Pelt me" he begged, "with small stones like this; do not cripple me with larger ones,

For if my legs are crushed by stones I shall only be able to pray in a sitting position."

Finally a heavy stone took its effect upon him and his heart was convulsed with the pain.

[*Ro. 130*]

So much blood did he shed from his heavy heart because of that stone that the heart of the very stone bled for his pain.

To escape from the boys he set out for Basra, limping and distressful.

He arrived there after nightfall and left the road to find somewhere to sleep.

He made his way into a corner where a murdered man was lying, his body covered with dust and blood.

Buhlul did not know this. He lay down to sleep beside the murdered man and all his clothes were soaked in his blood.

[*Ri. 161*]

The next day some people came along and saw the man lying there foully murdered.

They saw Buhlul standing in front of him, both his clothes and the ground being covered with blood.

They at once concluded (strange!) that Buhlul had done this deed.

They said to him: "Whence art thou, dog? For we recognise nothing about thee."

"I came here" he answered "from Baghdad. I lay down beside this corpse and went to sleep.

I knew nothing about the murdered man until the world became light with the dawning of day."

They said: "Thou comest from Baghdad to Basra under cover of darkness in order to shed this blood."

They bound his hands tightly, carried him off and delivered him up to a merciless jailer.

The anguished Buhlul said to himself: "What wilt thou do now, O my heart?

Thou didst escape from the boys' stones but here thou art entangled with death.

Hadst thou resigned thyself in Baghdad, thou wouldst not now be in fear of thy life."

Finally they informed the king¹⁴ and the order came that he should suffer a cruel death.

When he was brought to the foot of the gallows, the executioner set up his ladder,

And when he was about to put the rope around Buhlul's neck, he raised up his head towards God

And murmured some secret, when there sprang up from a corner one

who had gambled away his all.

He raised a cry and shouted: "He is innocent: it is I that killed him and I deserve to die.

I cannot bear such a burden, my back cannot bear the weight of two murders."

Both men were taken before the king. The king's vizier was then present.

The king of Basra had long wished to sit for a while with Buhlül.

He greatly desired to meet him and yet had never seen his face.

[*Ri. 162*]

The vizier, seeing and recognising him, for he had met him before, rejoiced greatly.

He opened his mouth and said: "O fortunate king, if thou wast seeking Buhlül, behold, this is he."

[*Ro. 131*]

The king at once leapt for joy and made him a place beside him.

He kissed his head and face and showed him a hundred kindnesses, giving him a seat of honour.

When they had dealt with the case of the murderer and his victim and then had told the story of Buhlül,

The king of Basra gave order that the young man's blood should be shed forthwith.

But Buhlül said to the king: "O Victorious Monarch, if thou wouldst soothe the pain in my heart,

Heaven forbid that thou shouldst shed his blood, for if thou do so thou shalt not rise again.

Since he rose up and because of the honesty that was in him, sacrificed himself to save me,

And forfeited his life for mine, how can this young man's blood be shed?"

The king then sent for the kinsmen of the murdered man and said to them: "You must ask for blood-money

If you wish for his execution it is not well. I am now in his place. It is no longer his affair.

He is a sinner but has repented because Buhlül interceded for him."

In short that matter was quickly settled with gold, and all the young man's enemies were satisfied.

The king of the age then asked the young man: "When thou sprangest up from the midst of the crowd,

What had come over thee that thou badest farewell to thy life and wert not afraid, but spokest up calmly?"

The young man replied: "I saw a dragon the like of which I have never seen anywhere.

Its jaws were wide open and it was belching fire: it would have made the hard rock tremble for its life.

It said to me: 'Arise and speak the truth, otherwise thou art lost this very instant.

In a single moment I shall have involved thee in disaster; I shall be with thee for ever.

[*Ri.* 163]

Thou shalt suffer eternal torment and none shall ever come to thy aid!

For fear and dread of it I sprang up and confessed what I had done in order to escape."

That monarch then asked Buhlul: "What didst thou say on the gallows?"

He answered: "I despaired of my life and it was clear to me that I should die.

I raised up my head and cried: 'O God, what wilt thou of this poor wretch?

It is Thou Who hast done all these things to me at one time. If they are now to put me to a cruel death,

I shall ask the blood-money of Thee, not of them. Why should I clutch the skirt of these poor wretches?

I have Thee to turn to, I have no one else, for Thou only controllest my destiny.'

When I had spoken these words behind the curtain of secrecy, the young man sprang up and shouted.

[*Ro.* 132]

By his shout he brought me down from the gallows and with his reply he unveiled the mystery of this matter.

Although the tribulations that God visited upon me have brought me to a state of distraction,

And though He first of all caused me to welter in my blood, yet I cannot with a hundred lives repay Him.

Since my misfortune came upon me from His presence I must go before Him though I lose a hundred lives."—

But as long as thou seest others than God, thou wilt attribute evil and good to others than He.'

(7) Story of Laith of Būshanj¹⁵

'Laith of Būshanj went out to the market and was struck on the neck by a tyrannical Turk.

Someone said to the man: "O Turk, what is the meaning of this blow? Dost thou not know who this is?

It is such-and-such a one who is pure light like the sun and whose company the Sultan prefers to the pleasures of the feast."

The Turk had heard tell of Laith and when he was thus informed of his worth

[*Ri. 164*]

He repented, and, as sinners should, presented himself before the saint to seek his pardon,

Saying: "My back is broken by my offence; I did not know, I made a mistake, I was drunk,"

The saint, sad of heart, thus answered him: "O man of war, set thy heart at rest.

For if I regarded the blow as coming from thee it would be a mistake, but coming from where it does it is no mistake."—

Regard all things as coming from God, but do not slacken for a moment in thy service.

Thou dost not know whether thou art rejected or not, whether thou art blessed or not by God's decree in Eternity Past.

But thou dost know that while thou still livest it is pure gain for thee to walk according to His commandment.

This thou knowest and that thou dost not know, and one cannot base certainty upon supposition.

God is great and noble; it is thy duty to serve Him always.'

(8) Story of Moses and the devotee¹⁶

'A certain pious person never rested from his devotions; there was no hour of the day when he was not worshipping God.

Day and night he was occupied in worship; his whole life was passed in worship.

[*Ro. 133*]

An inspiration came to Moses from God to say to this devotee "O contented one,

What is the purpose of thy constant devotions, for thy name is in the register of the damned?"

When Moses came and delivered the message, the devotee increased his devotions

With such zeal that he multiplied them a hundredfold.

Said Moses: "As thou art one of the damned, why art thou so busy with thy devotions?"

He that had gone astray on the Road thus answered Moses:

"O parrot of Mount Sinai, O man of the Court of God,

[*Ri. 165*]

I had long thought that I was nothing and amounted to nothing.

But when I learnt that at least I had been counted, I increased my devotions a thousandfold,

Since I found my name amongst His damned everything seemed fairer to me than before.

Be it water or fire, whatever comes from Him is good.

Whatever comes from that Court, be it evil or good, is provision for the Road.

Whether I receive light from Him or fire, He is God and my duty is to serve Him.

I never ask myself whether He is near or far, for such as I am I am always in His presence."

When Moses came again to Mount Sinai God thus addressed him from the summit of mysteries:

"Having seen that this devotee was such that his whole body was absorbed in worship,

I approved his loyalty and devotion, but now he has redoubled his exertions.

Since he has increased his service, so too the grace of God has increased towards him.

I now number him among the blessed and have erased his name from the tablet of the damned.

I have placed him among the saints: take these good tidings to him from Me."—

Since thou art not informed of mankind's secrets, do not disavow even in the slightest way.

It is a mark of ignorance to acknowledge or disavow, for tomorrow the value of the coin will be known.'

(9) Story of the saint from Bukhara and the catamite¹⁷

'A saint from Bukhara was travelling along the road when he chanced to meet with a catamite.

Seeing him draggle-tailed from the sins of the world he drew away his skirt in disgust.

[*Ri.* 166]

Said the catamite: "O man of Bukhara, the value of my coin and thine is not yet known.

[*Ro.* 134]

Do not make play with thy coin today, for tomorrow the value of all coin will be declared.

Since it is not yet clear who will be accepted and who rejected, thou

shalt neither profit by what thou art nor suffer by what I am.

Since thou knowest of thy blindness today, why draw away thy skirt from me?

Today thou must wait to see what shall be written in thy name to-morrow."

When that man heard these words of his, he fell to the ground with his heart filled with anguish.—

O heart, who knows the value of thy coin today, for thy heart has turned away from him?

If thou enquire into the value of thy soul, thy astonishment will be greater every moment.

Walk according to the commandments, if thou canst, nothing else is thy concern.

Thou shalt be carried off from hence whether thou wert good or evil, thou hadst no hand in thy coming and shalt have no hand in thy departure.'

(10) Story of Ghazzālī and the Heretics¹⁸

'Some people said to Ghazzālī: "The Heretics intend to extinguish thee like a candle."

He took fright and sat in his house waiting for Destiny to assist him.

Having sat for a long time in his house his heart all at once became weary thereof.¹⁹

He sent someone to Būshanjī to say: "O learned master on the Road to God,

I have remained in my house for fear of the Heretics: if I was sane I have become mad.

What dost thou command me to do so that I may find a cure to this pain?"

Būshanjī was angered by this message; he said to the messenger: "Say to thy master the imam: 'O thou misguided one, thou art neither God's confidant nor His adviser.

[*Ri.* 167]

When God first brought thee into existence, He did not consult thee when He created thee.

Neither will He consult thee about thy death. Be of good heart and do not concern thyself needlessly.

Having brought thee into the world without thy assistance, so too He will take thee out of it.' "

When Ghazzālī heard this message his heart rejoiced and he leapt up out of the snare.—

Since thou hast not access to the Kingdom of God, it shall not be as thou wilt. What wilt thou then?"

[Ro. 135]

(11) Story of the preacher and the madman

'One learned in religion was offering up a prayer and a great crowd of people were uttering "Amen".

A madman said: "What is 'Amen'? I do not know what this word means."

They told him: "When our master the imam asks something of God, 'Amen' means 'so be it, so be it, so be it'." The madman cried out:

"It will in no way be thus and so as the Imam wishes. Why so put yourselves out?"

It will be neither more nor less than as God wishes. Why then make wishes yourselves?"—

If thou art not to receive thy daily bread, thou shalt receive nought but heartbreak instead.

If He wishes thee to prosper thou shalt, and if not thy rose will produce a thorn.'

(12) Story of the madman who was weeping²⁰

'A madman was seated in the road upon a heap of ashes.

Now he scattered pearl-like tears and now he scattered ashes.

Someone said to him: "O prisoner of the ashes, why art thou always weeping so bitterly?"

[Ri. 168]

He answered: "My soul is filled with anguish and therefore I am drowned in tears like a candle.

I need God utterly to the exclusion of all else, and He does not need me at all."

(13) The madman's colloquy with God

'In the desert there was a madman who, when carried away by his madness,

Would gaze up to heaven and would say, with anguish in his heart: "O God, it is not Thy practice to love, but I shall love Thee always.

Though there are many like me who love Thee, I love no one but Thee.

[Ro. 136]

How shall I tell Thee, O Illuminator of the World? Learn for one moment from me what it is to love.”—

Live thus, for every moment a hundred worlds are gathered together in their yearning for Him like moths around a candle.

Although one cannot find by seeking the cause, yet one can find by luck.

If luck helps thee only a little, it will guide thee all the way to the sun.’

(14) The shaikh’s words on the coming of luck²¹

‘A man said to a shaikh: “O man of good works, what wilt thou do, if luck favours thee?”’

He answered: “If luck comes it will itself tell me what must and should be done.

Whosoever is favoured by luck, it is luck that is at work in him.” ’

[*Ri. 169*]

Discourse XI

The son said: 'If I attain to power, why should I be disturbed or led astray?

If I seek power in moderation do not forbid me if I follow this road.

If my desire for power be not too strong, the pride of power will not sweep me away like a flood.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'Though thy share of power be but little, yet from that little thou wilt remain a long time in the well.

And if thou then look back to acts of devotion, there will at once be a new screen between thee and God.

And since by an act of devotion thou canst create such a screen by seeking power thou will create many more such screens.'

(1) Story of the man who practised asceticism in the desert¹

'There was a great man of the preachers of God's unity who lived his whole life as an ascetic in the desert.

He had with him neither bucket nor ewer nor rope; he had neither water nor provisions for the road.

Then finally he went upon the road like a traveller with a piece of bread in the collar of his garment.

[*Ro. 137*]

Now he sniffed at the bread, now he ate a piece, now he slept for a while like one exhausted.

Someone said to him: "After thy life had been such how has thou become so helpless? What is the reason?

Thou art constantly sniffing at a piece of bread: having been like that why art thou now like this?"

He answered: "I feel remorse for that way of life; I am doing penance for what I then did.

For my asceticism was conceit; my pride and ignorance great.

It was all pretence, nothing but pretence. Now a ray of truth has shone upon me

[*Ri. 170*]

And has caused me to repent of my pride; and my repentance increases all the time.”—

To live on anything other than God—how is that proof of being His slave?

If thou live on anything other than God, thou art assuredly the slave of that thing.

If thou art attached to a hair, thou art still to that extent in bondage.

Thou oughtest to rise up out of thyself entirely, but instead thou addest to thyself every moment.

Knowing that death is inevitable why dost thou make no provision for it?

Thou art not more verdant than a leaf. Rise, then, tremble, turn yellow and fall.

If thou fall before this Door, thy fall will be the beginning of thy elevation.

If thou fall, ruined and desolate, before this door thou wilt rise in such manner that thou wilt be a sun.’

(2) Story of the madman who saw a coffin

‘Some men were carrying a coffin. A drunken madman caught sight of it from afar.

He said to one of the men: “Who was this dead person whom the lion of death has suddenly snatched away?”

They answered: “O bewildered fool, he was a young and powerful athlete.”

The madman replied: “Although this young man was a mighty wrestler,

He did not know, poor wretch, with whom he was to wrestle today.

He has come to grips with a very powerful opponent, ruthless in his strength,

He has thrown him so violently into the dust and blood that he will not now rise again.

But one can say ‘God be praised’ for the young man can be seen in that place

Where to give one’s life is to live and recovery comes only from falling.”—

[*Ro. 138*]

Since none escape from falling many will fall into this sea.

[*Ri. 171*]

If thou wilt not fall here, it is because thou hast no soul and dost not believe that thou wilt rise again.

Thou wert pleased with the world and soaring on thy wings hast buried thy claws in this carrion.

But thou hast neither seized nor bought this village; consider that thou hast never seen it.

No wise man has need of a world which in a short while comes to an end for its people.

Why is thy soul attached to the world, which itself is dependent on a single moment of time?

The real world is that other world if thou art worthy of it; there thou shalt be, for thou belongest to that world.'

(3) Story of what the Prophet said about a newborn child

'Thus spoke the Prophet to his companions: "The child that is born of its mother,

When it is cast upon the face of the earth is excessively weak and tearful.

But when it has seen the light of this world and the broad expanse of earth and heaven,

It does not wish to re-enter its mother's womb and be encompassed again in darkness.

Whoever has forsaken the bonds of this straitened nest and entered the broad plain of that other world,

His case is exactly as that of the child which enters this world from the womb.

Just as that child, having come into the world, never wishes to return to the womb,

So, as I have told thee, whoever goes from this to that world, his case is like the case of that child."—

O heart, since thy soul is not of this world, cast this world upon the fire if thou art worthy of thy soul.

If thy heart will not guide thee, how then wilt thou find the way in thy bodily frame?

[*Ri. 172*]

For if it is possible to reach the end of the journey, know of a certainty that one can do so only through the soul.

Construct a place of retirement within the monastery of thy heart and build from this retreat a road that will lead thee to God.

If thou do aught let it be in keeping with thy soul; do not parade it on the end of a stick, do it secretly.

[Ro. 139]

It is not right for thee to change thy garb: it was He who sewed it; the cloak is not of thy making.

But if thou art man enough change not thy garb but thy soul.'

(4) Story of Ḥasan and Ḥabīb²

'Ḥasan was travelling together with Ḥabīb. When the two masters came to the Jaiḥūn,³

Ḥasan looked and could not see Ḥabīb. He hurried backwards and forwards

And finally caught sight of him on the far side of the Jaiḥūn, and knew that his station was greater than his own.

He said: "O Ḥabīb, man of the Court of God, it was from me that thou didst learn to walk this way.

How didst thou speed across the river? By what means didst thou accomplish this miracle?"

Ḥabīb replied: "O Absolute Master, I have achieved this upon the path of God,

Because it has been my practice to whiten my heart, whilst it has always been thine to blacken paper."—

If thou wilt have the courage to change thy heart, the sun of thy love will revolve around the heavens.

Let thy heart be free both of anthropomorphism and of agnosticism, innocent of all exegesis and interpretation;

Sometimes entirely absorbed in pure sanctity and sometimes chained in terrestrial bonds;

Sometimes in self and sometimes out of self, in both states so that thou mayst achieve perfection in both.'

[Ri. 173]

(5) Story of Shiblī and a questioner⁴

'One day Shiblī was in his assembly and someone asked him a question, saying: "O world-illuminator,

Tell me, what is a mystic?" He answered: "A mystic is a man who, had he both worlds in front of him,

Would lift them both up with one hair of his eyelashes, for the mystic can accomplish even more than this."

Another day someone else asked him: "What is a mystic, O master of the mysteries?"

He answered: "A mystic is a person so weak that he cannot endure the world for a single moment."

[Ro. 140]

Someone sprang up and said: "O illuminator of the world, on such-and-such a day thou saidst that a mystic was so-and-so.

Now today thou sayst that he is so-and-so. Thou hast introduced a contradiction into the teaching of the Faith."

Shibli gave a clear answer: "O questioner, that day I was not myself, But since I am myself today, O friend, I can give no better answer than this."—

Whoever sees beauty from one side only does not see it completely.

One must see both the good and the bad, when one is in and outside of oneself.

If thou see it all together thou wilt see that bad and good are connected.

If thou look at the bad, thou wilt see that it is good for it all comes from Him.

Do not look at the limbs of thy beloved separately, but, like a man of vision, view them as a whole.

Do not be lost in the contemplation of a single member, for one should always look at all seven members.

For when thou canst see both house and roof thou wilt find a whole world of love devoted to thee.'

[Ri. 184]

(6) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz in the bath⁵

'One day the silver-limbed Ayaz, because the sight of him inflamed men's souls, went alone to the bath.

Someone said to the victorious Maḥmūd: "Thy favourite has gone today to the bath."

When these words reached the King's ear his heart swelled up like the sea.

Like a man in an ecstasy the noble king went to the bath alone and resplendent in jewels.

He beheld the face of that peri-like one which had set the walls of the bath in flames.

From the reflection of his face the walls with the door and the roof were all set a-dancing.

When the monarch saw the beauty of his whole body, he saw his entire soul given up to each and every part of him.

His heart fell into the pan like a fish, and because of that fire he dropped on the floor of the bath.

Ayaz threw himself at his feet and said: "Tell me, O king, what has fallen in thy path today?

Thy intellect which was so perfect has become like that of one deranged."

The king replied: "When I saw only thy face, my heart had no conception of each separate member.

[Ro. 141]

Now that all thy limbs have become visible to me, I am the slave of each of them as they are of thee.

My heart was burning for love of thy face; now a hundred more fires have flared up.

Since my heart is ravished by each and all of your members, to which shall I now give my love?"—

O heart, set up thy beloved in thy soul; scatter before him the pearls which rain from thy eyes.

When he has mounted the throne of thy heart and cast out all its cares,

For joy at his presence thou wilt walk now on thy head, now on thy feet.

Gaze upon him and enjoy a whole world of pleasure, for such thou enjoyest in him every instant,

[Ri. 175]

And though thousands gather around thee and in their ignorance shower arrows upon thee,

Since thy beloved is present with thee it would be wrong for thee even to heave a sigh.'

(7) Story of Shaikh Bāyazīd and the rogue who was receiving a lashing⁶

'One day the world-illuminating Bāyazīd, intent upon some business, was passing through the money-changers' quarter.

On his way he came upon a rogue, immersed from head to foot in wrongdoing,

Who was being lashed for his crimes with such violence that his blood was flowing without end or limit.

Despite his suffering the rogue did not even heave a sigh but laughed and said:

"Would that I were always thus lashed, would that I were lashed with swords of fire!"

So impressed was the shaikh of the Faith at the behaviour of that rogue that he remained there waiting until nightfall.

When finally the man's punishment had come to an end, the saint of Bisṭām questioned him in secret:

“Having received so many lashes and lost so much blood thou wert still like a rose in full bloom,

Neither sighing nor shedding tears. I am amazed at thy behaviour.

Tell me the secret of joyously enduring suffering.”

The outcast rogue replied: “O shaikh, my beloved was present at a distance.

He stood there in a corner and all he did was to watch.

Seeing him standing there I was not conscious of pain.

Had I then received a hundred lashes, it would not have seemed a disaster in my eyes.

[Ro. 142]

My beloved was standing there for my sake—how should I not stand firm?”

When that incomparable man heard these words, a torrent of blood flowed from his eyes.

He said to himself: “O wretched greybeard, learn from this rogue the way of the Faith.

[Ri. 176]

All thy pious acts are worse than nothing. Behold what thou art and what he is.

Thou must learn the Faith from this rogue; if thou learn, it is thus that thou must learn.”—

It often happens that those who are submissive in the Faith receive instruction from the least of God’s servants.’

(8) Story of ‘Abdallah son of Mubārak and the slave?

‘One morning Ibn al-Mubārak went out in a snowstorm.

He saw a slave clad only in a shirt who was shivering in the cold.

He said to him: “Why dost thou not tell thy master so that he may provide thee with clothes?”

The slave replied: “What should I tell my master? He sees how I am.

Since he clearly sees how I am, what should I say? He knows better than I what should be done: what should I ask him?”

When Ibn al-Mubārak heard these words, the fire in his soul flared up to his crown.

He gave out a cry and fell unconscious: so eloquent a man fell into silence.

When he came to himself he opened his mouth and said: “I have found a guide.”

O seekers of the path of truth, ask the way of this Hindu.

Who knows what is hidden in every breast or whose heart, amongst so

great a multitude, bears His brand upon it?—

The heart that is conscious of His brand finds in an instant that its road has been shortened.

For the heart that bears the mark of His brand at once dances for joy and sacrifices its life,

Just as that Abyssinian learnt of His brand and on a single instant redeemed his wasted life.'

(9) Story of the Abyssinian who approached the Prophet⁸

'An Abyssinian came before the Prophet and said: "I repent and it is the time to do so.

If I can expect forgiveness and if my repentance is accepted it will only be through the intercession of such a prophet as thou."

[Ri. 177]

The Prophet replied: "Since thou hast repented be sure that thou art forgiven."

[Ro. 143]

The Abyssinian then asked: "When I was tempted into sin,

Did God, who has condemned my sins, see me committing them?"

The Prophet answered: "Dost thou not know that not even an atom is concealed from God's sight?

He saw every single atom of thy sins, but in His magnanimity He covered them over."

Hearing these words the Abyssinian heaved a deep sigh from his bleeding heart.

So swiftly did that sigh rush from his heart that it killed the bird of his soul.

He fell to the ground in front of Muṣṭafā and departed pure to God and fell pure at His feet.

The Prophet cried out to his companions: "Come quickly, O my companions,

That you may weep and utter the *takbīr*⁹ over one who was slain by God, overwhelmed with shame."—

He that is killed by shame and contrition, though he be dead, his body is turned into collyrium.

If thou sniff a single grain of his dust there is contained in it, as it were, a hundred seas of shame.'

(10) Story of a man who found that his bride was not a virgin¹⁰

‘A certain man married a beautiful bride and found out that she had not retained the seal of her virginity.

When he found her without that seal, the mark of every virtuous woman,

Her whole body exuded the like of rose-water and like a rose she rent her very soul in place of her clothes.

Seeing his wife so overcome with shame and distress that her life was in danger,

He was filled with pity for her in her embarrassment and determined to overlook her fault.

He said to her: “I am no Muslim if I do not conceal this secret of thine.
[*Ri.* 178]

Thy mother shall not learn of it, and how shall thy father discover it?

No child of Adam is free from faults and if it has been thy lot to commit one,

I shall conceal it in order that the Creator may conceal mine, for I have more faults than thou.

Be of good heart and think no more of this; do not even remember these words of mine.”

When the next day came this state of affairs had passed and that golden bird began to shed her plumage.

So deep did she fall into the gulf of sickness that in a single day she suffered a hundred afflictions.

[*Ri.* 144]

Her veins and tendons began to moan like the strings of a harp; her intestines became as hard as a date-stone.

Seeing her gold-like face her husband brought a physician to her,

But how should his treatment produce the slightest effect, for every moment her paleness became more intense?

Her husband spoke to her in private, saying: “Thou art bringing thyself to an early death.

If thou wishedst me to conceal thy secret, I have done so and have remained silent about it.

And if it was thy intention that I should know nothing about it, suppose that I do not.

Why hast thou so tormented thyself as to make thyself ill?”

The wife replied: “O my kind husband, someone like thee can only utter kind words.

Thou hast spoken and acted as befits thee and hast concerned thyself about this poor creature’s misfortune.

But what can I do with the sense of shame that I feel when I know that

thou knowest my secret?

Since thou art aware of my sin, how shall this fire ever disappear from my path?"

So she spoke and swooned from shame: her days were darkened and her condition grew worse.

She gave what she had to give; and having nothing she gave her life.—

[*Ri.* 179]

If a drop of water is swallowed up in the universal sea, why dost show thy grief by scattering dust on thy head?

Do not bring thyself by grief to the state of a drop of water, for the drop of water is better off in the sea.

Why wert thou born since thou art to die a miserable death? It would have been better if thou hadst died before thou wert born, like sparks of fire.

Why didst thou rise up since thou art destined to lie down? Why didst thou come since thou art destined to go?"

(11) Story of Alexander and the words uttered over him by a sage

'When Alexander was sadly laid to earth, a sage spoke thus over his dust:

"O king, thou hast made many journeys but none like the one thou makest now.

[*Ro.* 145]

Thou hast wandered round the world like the celestial spheres, but thou art finished with such wandering.

Why, since thou hadst to go, didst thou come? Why didst thou come, since thou hadst to go?¹¹

Where thou now art, thou knowest nothing of thy treasure, nor of the place to which thou art sending it.

Why must there be so many ties? And how much more will there be of this coming and going?"

(12) Story of the madman¹²

'There was a certain wretched madman, for whom every day was worse than the day before.

He was weary of himself and others and saw no prospect either forwards or backwards.

He opened his mouth and spoke saying: "O Knower of mysteries, since there is no end to all this creating,

How long wilt Thou bring and take away? Art Thou not weary, O Lord, of creating?"—

Thou sayest what when I leave this world I must show Thee a sign with my soul.

But since my soul will leave this world without a sign, how shall anyone look for a sign on one that has none?

I do not know what will cure my ill, nor what my heart is or my soul.

[Ri. 180]

This helpless self of mine has no remedy against its own constant unevenness.

I have walked every street and wandered in every direction, but nowhere did I find any hope.

I have travelled much around the world, and that is the reason for my bewilderment.

I was wrenched from the garden of *Alast*¹³ and cast down headlong into this prison.

Therefore I am bewildered and lost and seek to rest, if only for a moment, on my nurse's lap.

Could I return whence I came without kith or kin, this would be the highest bliss.

Uncertain whether I shall return or not I wander dazed with anxiety night and day.

My heart is filled with pain and my soul with remorse, for my day is dark and my moon behind a cloud.

If my feet are halted at this stage of my journey, my heart, caught in the clay, will become vile and worthless.

[Ro. 146]

In our blindness we have turned our back on the Mysteries; in our heedlessness we have forsaken the *khirqā*¹⁴ for the *zunnār*.¹⁵

We have abandoned reason and assumed the nature of the ass; we have abandoned good manners and adopted a shameless way of life.

If our heart too is caught up in such vain imaginings, it will in its foolishness be reduced to nought.

What profit is there from life? We have had no profit, and if we had it, it would have been of no avail.

O heart, how long wilt thou be in slaying me? Why dost thou burn me over a slow fire? Thou neither bowest thy head nor dost thou raise it.

If thou art in pain, thou art a man, sit like a man; sit manfully upon that pain.

Every moment thou art still more overwhelmed with pain—how long wilt thou cause me to welter in my blood?

All the time thou appliest the snuffers to my head as to a candle, and with the other hand thou art decking me out again in finery.

[*Ri.* 181]

If I stumble, thou sayest: "Rise" and if I run thou sayest: "Not so fast".
Be I near or far, whilst I am I, I am forsaken.

I know nothing of "Give" or "Do not give"—deliver me from this word
"Give".

Like Bū Aiyūb¹⁶ build thyself a house, and when thou hast built it leave
the door open,

In case perchance Muṣṭafā himself may make his bed in thy house,
beggar though thou art.

Then if thou art an unbeliever he will give thee faith, and if thou ailest
he will heal thee.

Since the *pīr*¹⁷ will guide and assist thee, be his disciple for a man is
entirely dependent on his *pīr*.

Since the *pīr* who guides thee has God's authority, his acts are tant-
amount to acts of God.¹⁸

(12) Story of Ḥasan of Basra and Sham'ūn¹⁹

'Ḥasan, in Basra, was the teacher of the world; his neighbour was an
ailing Guebre,

Who for eighty years had practised fire-worship, ignorance and
drunkenness.

The Guebre was known amongst the people as Sham'ūn: like a candle²⁰
he kept his head always beneath the flame.

[*Ro.* 147]

When his illness had passed all bounds, pity welled up in Ḥasan's heart.

He said to himself: "I must pay him a visit today and enquire about his
ailment.

What though he be a Guebre with no capital? After all, he is my
neighbour."

He went to Sham'ūn and found him lying bleeding on the floor,

His face blackened with the smoke of the fire; and neither the clothes
on his back nor his hair were clean.

[*Ri.* 182]

The shaikh opened his mouth and said: "Fear God, old man. How long
wilt thou persist in thy error?

Thou hast wasted thy whole life in vanity, lying between the fire and
the smoke.

Thou hast offended thy God; thou hast pledged thy soul and thy body
to hell.

Thou thinkest thou hast had some profit from the fire; thou dost not
know that all thou hast had was smoke.

Do not act so, O man asleep, if thou wouldst be saved, for though thou wert a lion thou shalt not prevail over God.

Why warm thy heart with fire? If it but touch thee thou wilt burn at once.

In that fire there is not a single atom of loyalty: it is wrong to expect it to keep faith even in the slightest way.

Even if it kept faith for a single instant it would spare thee even if only for a moment.

Thou hast worshipped fire all thy life and yet, strange though it seems, it will burn thee in the end.

As for me, who worship God with heart and soul, see me now thrust my hand in the fire,

In order that thou mayst learn, sinner that thou art, that none can save in this world but God alone."

So saying he put his hand in the fire and not one hair on it was harmed.

When the old Guebre saw the shaikh's hand he was amazed and dumb-founded.

The dawn of knowledge began to break; like a candle Sham'un received light.

He said to Ḥasan: "What state is this? For seventy years

I have been worshipping the fire, and now I am filled with thoughts of God.

At this juncture when death is close at hand a dawn has broken upon my dark heart.

What shall I do? What dost thou advise? For I have not long to live."

[*Ri.* 183]

The shaikh opened his mouth and said: "Become a Muslim, old man. That is thy proper course."

Then said Sham'un: "O beneficent one, I have greatly offended God with words.

If thou wilt help me now give me a note and be my surety,

That God will forgive me and instead of punishing me will grant me the favour of seeing Him in Paradise.

[*Ro.* 148]

I will accept Islam and follow the right path, but first thou must give me a note."

Ḥasan acted with kindness and wrote a note going surety for all he had asked,

But the old man went on: "O holy shaikh, some competent and disinterested persons from Basra must witness this note, for I fear the wrath of God."

Ḥasan complied with the old Guebre's wish and procured certain eminent men to witness his words.

Then he took the note and gave it to Sham'un; and the well-disposed Sham'un became a Muslim.

Having taken the note he said to Hasan: "When predestined death shall have carried off my soul,

Wash me clean and wrap me in a winding-sheet; lay me with thy own hands in the aged earth."

So he spoke and his pure soul soared aloft: a great crowd of people gathered around his dust.

They placed that note in his hand and remained sitting around him till nightfall.

Hasan did not sleep that night: he was thinking to himself all night, praying and repeating the name of God.

He said to himself: "A clever teacher I am. I have given a note without knowing what I did.

I acted rashly and it was from ignorance. I do not know whether it was hard or easy.

I fear lest I shall myself die by drowning—how then can I hold out a hand to a drowning man?

Owning no water and clay of my own how can I dispose of God's domain?"

Such were his thoughts until dawn, when a messenger came in the guise of sleep.

[*Ri. 184*]

That candle of the Faith dreamt that Sham'un was walking in Paradise, A crown of royal majesty upon his head, upon his back a robe bestowed by God's favour,

His lips smiling, his cheeks glowing like the sun, sure of his place in the Eternal Kingdom.

Hasan asked him how he fared in that abode. He answered: "Why ask me? See for thyself.

God has made the eternal Paradise my dwelling-place; through His grace He has revealed His face to me.

Now thou art released from thy suretyship. Take this note and be concerned no longer."

Hasan said: "When I awoke, the note was in my hand and my eyes wide open."—

If thou wouldst cure ills cure them thus. Stand surety for the Faith in this way.'

Discourse XII

The son said: 'If rank is forbidden me, at least tell me what the cup of Jamshīd is.

For though I long to find it I have no idea of its nature.'

Father's reply

With the diamond of his tongue the father then pierced the pearls of exposition.

He said to the son: 'If thou have guidance from above, this tale will suffice thee all thy life.'

(1) Story of Kai Khusrau and the cup of Jamshīd¹

'Kai Khusrau was seated like Jamshīd himself, the cup of Jamshīd placed in the sun before him.

In it he observed the secrets of the seven climes and then perambulated the seven planets.

[*Ri.* 185]

Nothing of good or evil remained concealed from him; it was all revealed in the cup of Jamshīd.

He sought to see the cup itself in order for a moment to see the whole world at once.

But though he saw the whole world he could not see in the cup of Jamshīd the cup itself.

He puzzled much over that mystery, but no veil was raised from before it.

Finally he descried a piece of writing: "How canst thou see me in myself?

Since I have quite vanished from myself who shall see any mark of me in this world of dust?

Since both body and soul have vanished from me, there remains neither name nor trace of me.

Whatever thou seest is thyself, it is not I, for I shall never again be visible.

Since my image has been changed into lack of image, why dost thou seek my image which has departed to eternity?

All things can be seen in me because I myself cannot be seen.

Though my being were reduced to a single atom, that atom would still be deluded about itself.

No one shall ever see a single atom of me, for through a single mote the sun itself does not become a mote.

[Ro. 150]

If thou seek news of thyself be dead to thyself, do not look at thyself.

Although the pupils of thy eyes are small, yet they were dead to themselves before thee.

They do not see their own faces at all for as long as they have been they have chosen to be dead.

They hold no high opinion of themselves for the dead cannot see themselves.

If thou wouldst have life in death, thou wilt recognise death as the perfection of life.

If thou wouldst find the eternal design, it can be found only in the absence of all design.

Now if thou wouldst be like me, become like me, bid farewell to thyself, vanish into annihilation.

[Ri. 186]

Thou must build a castle of annihilation, otherwise blows will rain down on thee from every side."

When Kai Khusrau learnt of this mystery, he found his hands empty of his own kingdom.

He knew for certain that he had no kingdom but annihilation, for in this world existence itself does not survive.

When he saw that the desert of self was a barrier against him, and saw too that the cloak of selflessness was cut to his size,

Manfully he bade farewell to his short-lived kingdom; he made the profession of faith and laid himself to rest in the arms of annihilation.

Luhrāsp chanced to be at hand. He called him and set him up in his place in the kingdom.

He entered a cave taking the cup with him. He disappeared under the snow; think no more of him.²

If a man be drowned no trace is left of him; those on the shore know nothing about him.—

Thou art caught in the same whirlpool and dost not know that thou art dreaming.

For like us thou art ice in the sun or a piece of earth in the water.

When thou embarkest on the sea without a ship, the sea will tell thee what thou art.'

(2) Story of the stone and the clod of earth³

'A stone and a clod of earth were on a journey together when they happened to fall in the sea.

The stone exclaimed bitterly: "I am drowned, now I can tell my troubles only to the bottom of the sea."

But the clod vanished away; I do not know whither it went or what became of it.

But tongueless as it was it raised its voice and whoever had knowledge could hear it saying:

"Nothing is left of my *I* in either world; of my existence there is not left as much as the point of a needle.

[Ro. 151]

Of me neither soul nor body can be seen; it is all the sea, and that can be seen plainly."—

[Ri. 186]

If thou wilt become the same colour as the sea thou too wilt be a pearl that shines in the night in the depths of the sea.

But as long as thou desirest thy own being thou shalt find neither soul nor wisdom.'

(3) Story of Shibli and the young man in the desert⁴

'One day Shibli was walking along a desert road burning like a candle from end to end,

When he beheld a young man like a candle at a feast carrying a nosegay of narcissi,

With muslin on his head and sandals on his feet, strutting along in fine clothes.

He walked gracefully and elegantly like a partridge that felt secure from the hawk.

Shibli approached him, his heart full of kindness: he said: "O youth with the face of Jupiter,

Whence hast thou come so full of haste and joy?" The moon-faced youth replied: "From Baghdad.

I left there in the early morning and I have a long road in front of me."

Two hours had passed since dawn. Five full days passed on the journey.

When Shibli finally reached the Holy Sanctuary he saw someone lying exhausted in the road,

Weak, feeble and helpless, desperate and in fear of his life.

Shibli related to his friends as follows: "When he saw me, slowly and in a plaintive voice

He called to me in front of the Ka'ba, saying: 'O Abū Bakr, dost thou not recognise me?

I am that delicate young man whom thou sawst in such-and-such a place.

With a hundred thousand caresses and favours God called me to Him and opened the door.

Every instant He gave me another treasure; every moment He gave me more than I asked.

[*Ri. 188*]

And now when for once I thought of myself, He has caused me to turn on my head like a compass.

He has made my heart bleed and cast fire upon me; He has hurled me out of the rose-garden into the furnace.

He has afflicted me with sickness and poverty; in an instant He has separated me from Heaven.

[*Ro. 152*]

I am left without heart or world or faith; I am as thou now seest me.' "

Shibli said to him: "O noble young man, become as thou art commanded."

He answered: "O peerless shaikh, who has the eternal strength therefor?

Confused as I am, I can make nothing of this riddle: He says to me: 'Either thou art all or I am.'

I burn and suffer because this leaves me not a hair's breadth of room. What shall I do?"—

Thou sittest facing thyself; cease facing thyself and thou shalt be saved.

Thou wert sent hither for thy good but I see no good for thee here but annihilation.

As thy share of everything is nothing, so is torment the reward for all thy torments.

If thou travel on the Way, thou wilt suffer all thy life, for nothing shall be thy lot but nothing.'

(4) Story of a man crazed of heart at the head of a tomb⁵

'One crazed of heart was walking at dawn when he saw by the roadside over the dust of a saint

A pile of stones neatly placed together and, firmly fixed upon them, an inscription.

He stood there for a long while communing with the dead man's soul.

Then he spoke as follows: "This man who has gone to sleep possesses nothing, but it is concealed from him.

He was so mighty a man with so great a soul, and yet I do not see what he has taken with him upon this Road.

Apart from this stone set over his grave he has received no share of all creation."

[*Ri. 189*]

They said to him: "Explain thy words to us so that this mystery may be made clear to us."

He answered: "This man lies here having renounced both this world and the next.

He possesses neither the world nor the Hereafter; what he sought was something else.

But what did it avail him? For what he sought is so precious that none has ever attained or ever shall attain it.

Therefore, whether he was right or wrong, he has lost everything and is left with nothing."—

Behold this world, with all its weal and woe, is nought but ups and downs from end to end.

By day it exposes all of this to thy view, but at night it removes it from thy sight.

Renounce this tortuous world; whilst thou sittest at its table thou art nothing resting on nothing.

[*Ro. 153*]

Look at all of this raising up and putting down and perceive that thou shouldst count it all as nothing.

What is the Way? It is to cast away the cash of the soul, for one may not cast oneself into error.

Since thou art blind, thou wilt be always in error, for the design was sent by the Designer to lie in wait for thee.

Although thy pain is beyond measure, how can the Beloved reach out His hand to thee entirely?

For the lover must always burn so that the Beloved may shine through him.

But since the hand of the Beloved is worthy of all, how shall He ever extend it entirely to a single creature?

We are not worthy of the knowledge; we are left with the pain of longing for Him.⁶

Thou art the lover, it is right that thy heart should burn. Burn O heart, that he may shine.

Whether thou wishest it or not, thou hast no other way but this.

Thou wert brought into existence: lose thy existence in Him. There is not room for thee and Him—what wouldst thou then?"

[Ri. 190]

(5) Story of a madman who communed with God⁷

'A certain madman who was bound in chains, was whispering a secret to God.

Someone at once put an ear to his lips in order to discover that lofty mystery.

He was saying to God: "This madman of Thine had for a time shared a house with Thee.

But there was no room for Thee and me, for either Thou hadst to be in the house or I.

And so by thy command I have left this house: since Thou art here I, madman that I am, have gone."—

In this doctrine, than which there is no other way, neither polytheism nor any sin is worse than to speak of "We" and "I".

Come forth, O son, from this narrow house, for thy load is heavy and thy donkey lame.

Depart from hence to where there is no abode; bestride the Burāq of love,

For only the soul can bear the burden of love, but it must have the field of eternity.

Wait constantly at this door for the king may unexpectedly distinguish thee with his presence.

The main thing is for thee to be present, and nothing else; thou must be present—nothing else matters.

If thou standest ready at the door, thou wilt be favoured by the king's presence.'

[Ro. 154]

(6) Story of Sultan Malik-Shāh and the sentinel⁸

'One night there had been a great fall of snow where Sultan Malik-Shāh had pitched his tent.

Because of the cold the birds and fishes lay dormant huddled in corners.

The Sultan thought to himself: "Who, O Lord, will concern himself about the Sultan tonight?

[Ri. 191]

I must go out unobserved to find out who in this cold is lying at the door of my tent."

When he thrust his head out of the tent, he felt the effect of both snow and cold.

In no direction could he see a sentinel except one single man who, though lying on the ground, was wide awake.

He had a felt cloak wrapped around him, a tent-peg was his pillow and the ground his bed.

He had kept his boots on all night being detained in one place by the pressure of the snow.

I do not know whether out of ardour for the Faith thou wouldst have passed such a night at the Threshold.

Hadst thou a single atom of devotion in thy heart, thou wouldst have been granted such a night.

On the sound of the king's footsteps the man sprang up and shouted at him:

"Who art thou there?" The king at once answered: "It is I, friend, the mighty Sultan.

But who art thee, O zealous man, that standest guard over the Sultan on such a night?"

The man opened his mouth and said: "O king, I am an exile without a home.

I have no home but the king's threshold; I live only to serve the king.

While body and soul are still united my head shall be where the king's feet stand."

The king then said: "I hereby issue my decree and give thee the governorship of Khorasan."—

When, one night, the Sultan learned about a man, that man acquired great fame.

If thou wilt keep vigil one night at the Threshold of the Friend, what fortune will be thine, how blissful will be thy case!

If thou wilt remain awake one whole night and journey to the border of fidelity,

Thou shalt receive from His bounty an eternal robe of honour in every atom of which thou wilt see as it were a sun.

If thou be granted this vision only for an instant, though thou art blind, thou shalt be Lord of the Conjunction.

[*Ri.* 192]

Those saints who achieved their end saw nothingness in all things.

When thou too seest nothingness in all things, sugar will seem to thee like poison and a rose like a thorn.'

[*Ro.* 155]

(7) Story of Shaikh Abū Sa'id and Ma'shūq of Ṭūs⁹

'The Shaikh of Mihna sent three things, a toothpick,¹⁰ a cap and some sugar,

To Ma'shūq. When Ma'shūq saw these things he refused to accept

them as being the products of the creatures of this world.

He said to the servant: "Tell thy shaikh: 'I have lost all inclination for these things.

A toothpick is of use to someone who receives nourishment otherwise than by drinking blood.

I live on nothing but blood and thou knowest therefore that I no longer need a toothpick.

Sugar would be of use to someone who was not compelled by divine wrath to drink nothing but poison.

This bitterness never leaves my palate and thou knowest therefore that I am forbidden sugar.

A cap is suitable for someone who has a head or is to the smallest extent conscious that he has a head.

But one who feels that he has a collar without a head, how should a hat ever fit him?

Keep these things of thine, O life. I need but one thing, and thou knowest what it is.'"—

He that obtains the cash of the divine sun will regard all else as idle sport.

If thou have sustenance from the mystery of love thou wilt submit to being always without sustenance.

For if thou value this mystery as a whole world, thou shalt not need thy head ever.

But when its head is separated from a candle it lights up the dark places in the assembly.

And it is excellent to trim the head of a pen, otherwise no one can write with it properly.

When thou forsakest the false thou shalt receive the true; when thou discardest the conditional thou shalt receive the absolute.

[*Ri. 193*]

Thou must forsake thyself in order to enter fully into this state.

For while thou art still united to thyself, thou wilt lose the Beloved even there.'

(8) Story of Ayaz and the Sultan¹¹

'The silver-breasted Ayaz was sunk in sweet sleep; for a while his heart, like his eyes, enjoyed repose.

Maḥmūd the Conqueror, whose head was filled with pride, came to his pillow.

He did not wake him from his sweet sleep but kissed him a thousand times on both his cheeks.

When his had finished kissing him he stroked his feet until morning.

When finally Ayaz awoke from his sweet sleep he rose up like a fire for embarrassment before the king.

Seeing him the king said: "O thou whose beauty ever increases, now that thou hast come to thyself I am departing.

When thou wert unconscious thou wert beyond any praise that I could utter.

When I saw thee and thou didst so cheer my soul it was not thou, it was I in thy place.

When thou camest to thyself, the beloved disappeared; when thou becamest the seeker the sought one disappeared."—

[*Rb.* 157]

Be not, O friend, that thou mayst be beloved, for whilst thou art, thou art held apart by thyself.

Leave thyself behind, for without thyself thou art entirely We. Since thou art better so, why remain with thyself?

[*Ri.* 194]

When thou art not there, thou art there altogether; when thou art nothing, thou art all Maḥmūd.¹²

Whilst thou remainest with thyself none will speak of thee, but when thou leavest thyself behind, they will seek none but thee.'

(9) Story of the Moon and her yearning for the Sun¹³

"The Moon said: "For the love of the Sun I will fill the world with light for ever."

They said to her: "If thou speak true, thou must run fast night and day

Until thou reachest him; and when thou hast reached him, thou wilt disappear in him and become invisible.

Thou wilt burn then in his rays and thy existence will be abased by his exaltation.

And when thou comest forth from his rays, all mankind will be attracted by thy beauty.

They will point thee out to one another and open their eyes wide to see thee."—

What has happened so that a light should all at once come into view out of a light?

A distraught one, having vanished away without fear, appears before the never vanishing earth.

One who has burnt in the rays of the sun attains to union after separation.

In her fourteenth night, with all her beauty, she is not equal to herself as a slender crescent.

For on that night she decks herself out and none will look at her because she looks at herself.

But when she appears to thee like a toothpick, that is, when she is crescent, then they look at her.

So long as thou hast thy existence before thee, thou wilt be plagued with eternal torture.

Thy heart will be offended with the filth of polytheism only when it has taken up abode in selflessness.

If thy nature is weaned from the milk of polytheism, thou shalt through belief in God's oneness commence thy adult life.'

(10) Story of Bāyazīd and the questioner who saw him in a dream¹⁴

'One night a man awake [to the truth] dreamt that Bāyazīd suddenly appeared before him.

[Ro. 158]

He said to him: "O shaikh of the age, what didst thou say to the One God?"

He answered: "There came a command from the Court of God, saying: 'Tell me, O traveller, what thou hast brought Me from thy journey.'

I said to God: 'I have brought Thee sin, but I have not brought Thee polytheism from my journey.

In the world I once drank some milk and at night I had a violent stomach ache.

When the pain that night began to threaten my very life, I said to myself, "That is because of the milk I drank."

God said to him: "Thou sayest thou hast brought no polytheism to My Court.

Hast thou so quickly forgotten, old man, that thou broughtest polytheism with that milk?

When out of polytheism thou attributedst thy pain to the milk, thou drewst a line through the book of thy belief in the One God.'"

Make no claim to hold this belief, for thou drinkest the milk of polytheism.

How shall thy soul smell the rose of unity when the smell of polytheism comes from thy mouth?

Only then wilt thou be really adult, when thou art done altogether with the drinking of milk.'

(11) A dervish's question to Shiblī¹⁵

'Someone asked Shiblī: "Who first showed thee the way to God's Court?"'

He answered: "I saw a dog at the edge of some water, no longer able to endure its thirst.

[Ro. 156]

[Ri. 196]

Seeing its face reflected in the clear water, it thought it was another dog.

It would not drink the water for fear of the other dog and kept leaping back from the brink.

When from thirst its heart had lost all restraint and it could wait no longer,

It suddenly flung itself into the water, and the other dog disappeared.

It had vanished from its own eyes, for it had itself been that screen, and the screen had vanished.

Having learnt from so clear an example I knew of a certainty that I was the screen before myself.

I vanished from myself and so I prospered: a dog was my first guide upon the Road."—

Thou also shouldst disappear from the road of thy eyes; thou art thy own screen, therefore disappear from sight.

If thou retain a single hair of self, thou hast a heavy chain upon thy leg.

It would be better for thee, decrepit old man that thou art, if thou wert taken from the cradle straight to the coffin.

Moses held the rank that he did with God because he found his way from the cradle into the coffin.¹⁶

If thou must always be in His presence, do not go with thyself—this is sufficient wine for thee.¹⁷

Do not go with thyself, go without thyself, far removed from thyself, for such absence of self is "light upon light".¹⁸

If thou attain to [the knowledge of His] secrets thou shalt derive enjoyment from each and every member.

Thou shalt be no longer childish nor squinting; thou shalt speak through Him and thou shalt see everything through Him.'

(12) Story of Ibrahīm son of Adham¹⁹

'Ibrahīm the son of Adham was walking along when he saw two men,

One of them offering the other a grain of gold for some object but unable to conclude the bargain.

[Ri. 197]

Again the man said: "Take one grain, that is my final offer."

But the other replied: "I will not accept this; I will not sell it for one grain, I will not sell it [*in binad'ham*]."

When Ibrahim heard these words, he fluttered in his terror like a bird.

Now he swooned away, now he came to himself again. A man approached him

And asked: "What has befallen thee, O Sultan of the Faith, that thou art so cast down?"

He answered: "When this man said 'I will not sell it [*in binad'ham*]', I thought to myself that he said 'Ibn-i Adham'."

His words as he uttered them were: 'I will not sell it for a grain'. As I heard them, they were 'Ibn-i Adham for a grain.'—

Every single atom is constantly shouting, but it is only the wakeful heart that hears it.

Though thou hast never experienced the condition of the saints, thou hast at least heard fair tales about them.

[Ro. 159]

If thou wouldst know the perfection of their condition, lose thyself in the tales and traditions about them.

Cease to be, O mote, if thou wouldst have the disc of the sun for ever take thy place.

Were it not for the fact of thy existence, thou wouldst have no abode in this place.

Thou hast all these things for that reason; what afflicts thee day and night is for that reason.

Every child that dies in infancy makes nothing of the journey through the four elements.

But if thou wouldst have the cup in order to know, die to thyself whilst thou art still living.

I have heard, O prudent man, that the cup of Jamshīd did much to reveal the world.

But know, O friend, that the cup of Jamshīd is the intellect, which is thy kernel whilst thy senses are the shell.

Every single atom in both worlds is plainly visible in the cup of thy intellect.

[Ri. 198]

Thousands of arts, mysteries and definitions, thousands of commands and prohibitions, orders and injunctions,

Are founded upon thy intellect, and this is all. What cup couldst thou find more revealing than this?"

Discourse XIII

There came the fourth handsome son, all calm and repose from head to foot.

He said to his father: 'As long as I have been among the living I have sought with a hundred hearts to find the water of life.

If I can procure that water I am saved; otherwise I have nought but wind in my hand.

Out of longing for that water my soul is on fire; I neither eat by day nor sleep by night.

Because of this care my heart is filled with torment; I am thirsty and crave a drink of water.'

Father's reply

The father said to him: 'Thou art vanquished by thy desire, for thy heart is seeking eternal life.

Thou art searching for the water of life because the desire has revealed itself to thy soul.

If thou have but one ray of the light of truth, thou must master this desire.'

[Ro. 160]

(1) Story of Alexander the Greek and the wise man¹

'Alexander the Greek arrived in a certain place where he sought to make the acquaintance of one

From whom he might learn something of wisdom, a master whose apprentice he might be.

Thy path should be that of knowledge even if thou art king of the whole world. If thou have knowledge thou shalt be as Dhu'l-Qarnain.²

They said to him: "There is a man here who has not his equal in knowledge of the Faith.

[Ri. 199]

Some call him mad, while some consider him saintly and perfect.

His dwelling is beside the town gate: he is renowned for his love of solitude."

Alexander sent someone to fetch him; but he rebuffed the man he had sent.

Said the messenger: "Come, the king calls thee. Do not remain and be obstinate.

Obeys the command and if it goes hard with thee remember that Dhu'l-Qarnain is ruler of the whole world."

That peerless man opened his mouth and said: "I am not answerable to the king of the age,

For I am lord of Him Whose slave thy king is. Why then should I love thy king?

Thy king is one of the slaves of my slave; it is not fitting that I should go before him."

The messenger returned and delivered the man's message: and the illustrious king was angry with him.

He said: "Either this man is mad or else he is strangely ignorant.

I am at once the slave and the friend of God—who can say that God is his slave?

Neither king nor dervish dare call me one of his slaves."

He went to the man and greeted him. The man returned his greeting as befitted his rank.

The king said to him: "If thou art a man of experience, why dost thou call me one of the slaves of thy slave?"

The man replied: "O king, thou hast traversed the whole world

In order to lay thy hands on the water of life and so not die but have everlasting life.

This, O king, men call Desire; it is Desire that has driven thee slave-like along the road.

Thou hast assembled a hundred armies in order to make thyself master of the seven climes.

This, if thou didst but know it, is Greed, whose obedient slave thou art.

Thou hast submitted to Greed and Desire: therefore thy master is my slave.

[*Ri.* 200]

[*Ro.* 161]

Thou art rapacious because of Greed and Desire: therefore thou art the slave of my slave.

When Desire has once struck root, it seeks to remain for ever, therefore it asks thee for the water of life.

As for Greed, it asked thee for the whole world, and therefore asked thee for all these armies.

He that seeks life and the world, if he obtain neither it is for this reason.

If thou tremble for the life and the world, it is because thou art worth nothing to either.

There is in store for thee a life and a world that will endure for ever; thou hast no concern with this present life and world."

Blood flowed from Alexander's eyes. His heart said: "From such grief one can bleed."

Alexander himself said: "This man is not mad; there is no sage that is wiser than he.

He has brought much comfort to my spirit; this one victory is enough for this campaign."—

For fear of death Alexander sought the water of life and died young.

Why ask to hear the story of Alexander's wall?³ Thou art thy own wall; pass over it.

Thy existence is a wall in front of thee; thou art always hemmed by that wall, in thyself.

Behind thy wall thou art like Gog and Magog, for the collar about thy neck is a wall like Og.⁴

If thou remove this screen from before thee and rid thyself of the collar, like Og the son of 'Unuq,

Having thus freed thy neck, thou shalt be quit of all this grief.

Otherwise thou shalt see a hundred thousand curtains, and behind each curtain a dead soul.

If thou wish to pass through the fire, thou wilt not look at the furnace of this world.

If thou have failed only in the slightest way, thou shalt be confined within a fiery mountain.

[Ri. 201]

It is the essence of the Way to pass through fire. Why dost thou ask, if Siyāvush⁵ be innocent?

Had not God been indulgent towards thee, the dog of thy passions would not be so importunate.

Man's downfall comes from indulgence; were it not for indulgence crooked would be straight.

Thou art faced with so many calamities. Tell me, what wouldst thou do with thyself?

Thou art surrounded by a whole world of enemies; fear death, for in the end, thou shalt be dead.'

(2) Story⁶

'One of the pious has said: "If all men were to be condemned on Judgment Day,

It would not be surprising. What will be surprising, with so much iniquity, is that even one man may escape condemnation."'

(3) Story of the famine and the reply given by Ṭā'ūs⁷

[Ro. 162]

'One year a famine appeared and the people suffered great hardship.

A crowd of people, bewildered and desperate, approached Ṭā'ūs in their desire for rain,

Saying: "There is no sign of rain, pray to God that He may grant it for us."

Ṭā'ūs replied: "Dear friends, clouds do not shed their water for nothing.

You ask only for rain, but if it does not rain, this will not be surprising.

What is surprising, when there are so many sinners, is that all at once stones do not rain down on mankind."—

The clouds have forsaken the sky, but if there is any matter for surprise,

It is that the earth does not open up because of our wickedness and swallow us without our knowing.

Thou thinkest thou art a man of the Road. How so? Thou art lost on the Road.

When thy conceit is taken from thee, thou wilt see as it were a dead dog removed from thee.'

[Ri. 202]

(4) Story of the Prophet on the night of the Ascension⁸

'In the night of the Ascension the Prophet suddenly came upon a great sea, Round which there stood a crowd of angels, each of them shedding a torrent of tears.

The Prophet said: "O pure ones, why are you weeping together so bitterly?"

When the command came from the Hidden World, they opened their mouths before the Prophet,

Saying: "Ever since the heavens were first curved and God created us out of light,

We have been weeping because of those of thy people who while passing along this road

Think, although their efforts are of no avail, that they are accomplishing something—and yet they are accomplishing nothing.

They do not know and because of their conceit they live their whole lives in false hopes."—

With the capital of what thou hast and what thou knowest how wilt thou engage in commerce?

If thou hadst ever felt the pain of religion,⁹ thou wouldst never have suffered hurt from religion.

Work, for here thou art capable of work; when thou goest thither thou wilt find thyself heavily loaded.

[*Ro. 163*]

Alas, all thy profits have turned to loss; thou hast lost thy way and the caravan has passed.

Alas, thou hast thrown away thy life, thou hast not lived it aright.

Why ask God for another span of life when thou dost not appreciate what has already been allotted thee?

One who did not value a single grain of life cannot aspire to a whole treasure-house full of it.

Do not wantonly fling thy life to the wind, for it will in any case pass away like the wind.

Life is so precious that, if thou wished, no one would sell it to thee even at the price of a life.'

[*Ri. 203*]

(5) Story of the miser and the angel of death¹⁰

'A miser, amongst the drunk and the sober, drudged and slaved,

Working harder and harder by day and night until he had amassed three hundred thousand dinars.

He had over one hundred thousand in property and more than one hundred thousand in cash buried in the ground.

He had a further one hundred thousand loaned out to the people of his country.

Seeing that his wealth was beyond measure, looking at his house and goods,

He said to himself: "Sit down and enjoy all this for a year. Thou wilt see then what will be.

If all this wealth shall have been spent on food and clothing, I can then, if need be, set to work again."

He sat down intending to enjoy these things and pamper himself with pleasures,

But had hardly conceived this idea when all of a sudden, 'Izrā'il entered to seek his soul.

Seeing 'Izrā'il approach he saw the world darken before his eyes.

He opened his mouth and began to plead with him, saying: "I have spent my whole life in hurry and bustle,

And now I have sat down to enjoy the fruit of my labours. Wilt thou suffer me to die without that enjoyment?"

But how should 'Izrā'il loose his hold on him? He made ready to seize his soul.

The man renewed his pleading, saying: "If it be so that thou must needs take my soul at this time,

I have three hundred thousand dinars; I will give thee one hundred thousand if they are of use to thee.

Grant me three days' respite and then carry out thy purpose."

But how should 'Izrā'il listen to such words? He laid hold of him as the snuffers lay hold of the candle.

[Ro. 164]

The man went on: "I undertake to give thee two hundred thousand dinars in cash.

Grant me two days' respite. That is not difficult." But 'Izrā'il would not grant this respite.

[Ri. 204]

Then the man offered the whole three hundred thousand dinars for a respite of one day only.

He pleaded for a long time but did not receive any respite nor achieve his purpose.

Finally he said: "I ask only for long enough to write a few words."

'Izrā'il granted this and he wrote in vermillion from the blood of his eyes:

"Look to your lives, O men. I offered three hundred thousand dinars to purchase a single hour of life, but I achieved nothing by my bargaining.

Make good use, if you can, of such a life, and appreciate its value.

For when like an arrow it has left the archer's grip, it cannot be brought back and will never return.

Whoever does harm to such a life has carelessly squandered it away."

(6) Story of the murder of the son of Marzbān the sage¹¹

'There was a perfect sage whose name was Marzbān: it was to him that Nūshīrvān owed his peace of mind.

He had a son as handsome as the sun, whose heart held the key to all knowledge.

An idiot chanced to kill that son, and the father's soul suffered grievous pain.

A friend said to Marzbān: "Thou must take blood-vengeance on this dog."

Marzbān answered: "It will not profit me to shed blood

And share in this man's deed by cruelly shedding the blood of a living creature."

They said to him: "Then take blood-money." "That", he said, "I will never do.

I cannot fix a price on my son: to spend the blood-money would be like drinking his blood.

[*Ri.* 205]

Did that wicked man act so well that I should imitate him?"—

Since it is not right to drink one's son's blood, why should it not be wrong to drink one's own?

Whoever wastes his life drinks his own blood.

[*Ro.* 165]

But one or two weeks remain of thy life and the better part of it has gone.

Having repented during those one or two weeks, how canst thou make good for the rest of thy life?"

(7) Homily¹²

'A wise and holy man said: "Whoever, in the gambling-den of this world,

Played such high stakes as to lose all he had and one of his eyes,

Even though he repented and did not break his vow of repentance—would he not still have needlessly lost an eye?

Even though by repentance he advanced to the front rank, how should he recover his lost eye?"—

O friend, every breath that thou takest and wastest by not mentioning the name of God,

Consider it an eye lost in gambling—how can this damage ever be repaired?

Do not love a thing so precious that once lost thou shalt never find it again.'

(8) Story of Buzurjmīhr and Anūshīrvān¹³

When Kīsrā's heart became enraged with Buzurjmīhr he put his eyes out.

Now a riddle was sent from Rūm with the message: "If this can be solved at the king's Court,

We will pay tribute, otherwise he shall have our hostility and nothing else.

[*Ri.* 206]

Kīsrā assembled all his wise men but none of them could discover the meaning.

They all said: "This is a secret of the heavens; it is a matter for Buzurjmīhr alone.

None but he can solve this mystery; let us submit this riddle to him."

Nūshīrvān sent for the banished sage; having thus humiliated him he now called him as dear as his own soul.

He told him of that riddle, saying, "None but thee can solve it."

The sage replied: "I should like to take a bath and then rest for an hour.

When my body has recovered its equilibrium, send for some ice and write these words upon it,

So that, although blind, I may by means of this device solve the riddle."

[*Ro.* 166]

They did as he said and he solved that riddle and solved it well.

The king's heart rejoiced exceedingly; he said to him: "Crave a boon of me."

The sage replied: "Thou seest my face: how thou madest me blind and puttest out my eyes.

Now I beg of thee, mighty king, for I am greatly distraught, give me back my eyes."

The king said: "How can I do this? Thou knowest thyself I cannot do it."

The sage replied: "O mighty king, since thou canst not give me back my eyes,

Do not be hasty, take something from a man that thou canst, if thou wishest, give him back.

Why didst thou take something so valuable that thou wouldst never be able to replace it?"—

Every breath that thou drawest is a costly pearl—what is more precious to thee than this pearl?

Do not gamble this jewel away, for if thou wouldst have it back what shouldst thou do?

[*Ri.* 207]

Every instant thou oughtest to go forward. How long wilt thou remain every instant with thyself?

Thou art not a violet and has not been a narcissus—why art thou then blind like the one and blue like the other?¹⁴

Thou art altogether like thunder, a noise that does not last; thou art altogether like the sign of Scorpio, blind and lame.

Thou art separated from thyself by thousands of curtains—how shalt thou discover the smallest thing about thyself?

Thou art without thyself; if thou attain to thyself thou shalt advance before the crowds that move backwards.

They do not wish to leave thee to thyself; thou hast a long life to make up for.

If thou be far from hence for a day, why shouldst thou be a stranger or forsaken?

Be sure that when that acquaintanceship¹⁶ begins this separation will cease.'

(9) Story of the bird that lays for forty days in the year¹⁶

'There is in the foothills a bird that lays eggs for forty days in the year.
Its home is in the region of Syria. It has no attachment to its eggs,
And having laid many in the course of forty days, it disappears from the
sight of men.

A bird of another species then appears and sits on the eggs.
It covers them with its feathers until one day it hatches the young ones
out.

That foster mother tends them in such a way as no other could have
done.

[*Ro. 167*]

When her flock of young ones are fully fledged and all at once begin to
notice one another,

Their mother appears in swift flight and settles upon the top of a lofty
mountain.

Suddenly from afar she emits a strange cry to call that flock of young
ones.

When they hear their mother's cry they abandon the strange bird for
her.

They return to their mother and have nothing more to do with that
other bird.—

[*Ri. 208*]

If for two or three days the deluded Iblis has taken thy existence under
his wing, thou shalt be forgiven,

For when the voice of God is heard, thou canst not but abandon Iblis
for Him.

Be such that when the hour of death comes, though thy body still re-
mains, thy soul has gone before divorced of self.

If thou die before thy time thou wilt through thy death enjoy eternal
abundance.¹⁷

Thy soul is a lamp in the desert, which is screened off by the niche of
thy body.

Once this niche is removed that desert will shine for ever like the
sun.

There are marvels without number in thy heart, but thou must strive
hard if thou wouldst know them.

Every moment advance anew in the path of the Faith, and both die to
thyself and go along with thyself,

For both through selflessness and self thou shalt put behind thee a world filled with evil,

And in place of every evil on the Secret Way thou shalt find a whole world of goodness.

Rejoice in whatever He gives thee and if He give thee nothing still be of good cheer and free from care.

Thou shouldst not refuse whatever comes from thence; if it is evil thou shouldst not complain.'

(10) Story of Buhlūl and the *halwā* and roast meat¹⁸

'When Buhlūl was attacked with melancholy Zubaida¹⁹ gave him a piece of roast meat and some *halwā*.²⁰

He sat gaily down to make a meal of it. Someone said to him: "Wilt thou not share it?" He was angry

He said: "Since God has just given me this food, how can I give it back to Him?"—

Be content with whatever He gives thee, and if thou canst acquiesce in thy destiny.

Whatever was decreed for thee from above thou canst not know but it is what thou needest.'

[Ri. 209]

[Ro. 168]

(11) Question put by Moses to God

'Moses put a question to God, saying: "O Knower without peer or equal,

Which of Thy creatures, whether friend of foe, is poorest and most needful of Thee?"

God answered: "It is he that has forfeited Our blessings and has rejected what We have allotted him.

He that clamours against his lot is in constant torment day and night."

(12) Kisrā's advice²¹

'Thus said Kisrā to Bārbad:²² "If thou wouldst be without sorrow,

Expel envy from thy heart, and thou shalt be happy; be content with God, and thou shalt be free."

(13) A pious man's prayer to God²³

'At dawn a pious man opened his mouth in prayer and said: "O Self-Existent One,

I am content with Thee both day and night; be Thou content with me also, O Lord."

The man related: "I heard a voice saying: 'I perceive thee to be a liar in what thou claimest.

If thou wert really content with Us, how wouldst thou ever ask Us to be content with thee?

If, O fool, thou art content with Us, why dost thou now seek Our contentment with thee?

He that is perfectly content, cannot, being already content, ask for contentment.

If thou art content with Us what dost thou ask? And if thou art not content why call thyself so?"—

Resign thyself, be patient, sit quietly and make no outcry. Why entertain vain thoughts? Do not argue or agitate thyself.

[*Ri. 210*]

Now thou desirest the impossible, now thou art prey to a hundred idle fancies.

Thou listenest not one jot to what is said, being deluded by thy desire for the impossible.'

(14) Story of Sha'bī and the man who had caught a finch²⁴

'Sha'bī, man of God, has related as follows: "A certain person whilst making a journey chanced to catch a finch."²⁵

[*Ro. 169*]

The finch said to him, 'What wilt thou of me? What wilt thou do with these legs, this head and neck?

If thou wilt free me from thy bonds I will teach thee three useful things.

I will tell thee one of them while still in thy hand, and the second when I have flown safely on to a branch,

The third when I have reached the top of the mountain: I will only tell it thee from the mountain-top.'

Said the man to the finch: 'Tell me the first secret.' And the finch opened its mouth and began:

'Whatever thou lovest, even thou it were thy soul, do not grieve over it even for a moment.'

The man then released the bird in accordance with its promise, and at once it settled on the branch of a tree.

Then it told him the second secret: 'If thou hearest something absurd, do not believe it until it has been proved to thee.'

So saying it flew to the mountain-top, from whence it called to him: 'Unhappy wretch,

There are inside me two enormous jewels, each of them weighing twenty *mithqāls*.²⁶

Hadst thou killed me, the jewels would have been thine. Thou hast lost me, it was a great mistake.'

The man's heart was turned to blood from vexation; he thrust into his mouth the finger of bewilderment.

Then he said to the finch: 'At least tell me the third secret for the sea of my regret is deep.'

The finch replied: 'Thou hast not a single atom of sense, for thou hast already forgotten the first two secrets.

Not having heard the first two aright, why dost thou ask for the third?

I said to thee, O man of pure character, do not grieve over what is lost and do not believe what is absurd.

[*Ri. 211*]

Thou hast grieved much over what is lost; I told thee something absurd and thou believedst me.

My flesh today does not weigh two *mithqāls*. How should two night-illuminating pearls weighing forty *mithqāls*

Be contained in my body? It seems to me now that thou art mad.'

So saying it flew away from the mountain top, leaving the man to his grief and vexation."—

Whoever entertains an absurd idea will be in a constant state of bewilderment.

Thou canst not place thy feet where thou wilt; walk and direct thy steps by God's commandments.

For whoever walks otherwise than by His commandment, will lose his head as quickly as he draws breath.'

(15) Story of the wasp and the ant²⁷

'A wasp flew out of its next, full of bustle and cheerfulness.

[*Ro. 170*]

An ant, seeing it so happy and so free from the dominion of servitude,

Said to it: "Why art thou so joyful? It is as though the earth is not big enough for thee and thy joyfulness."

The wasp replied: "Why, O ant, should my heart not be in a tumult of joy?

I settle wherever it pleases me and choose whatever food I like.

I traverse the whole world as my fancy takes me—why should I ever be sad?”

Having given this answer, it shot, like an arrow from a bow, into a butcher's shop.

In the shop was a piece of fat meat into which the wasp quickly thrust its sting.

By chance at that very moment the butcher brought down his cleaver on that piece of meat; and the blow cut the wasp into two halves.

Before it knew it had fallen to the ground, and the ant came in and carried off one half of it,

[*Ri.* 212]

And as it roughly dragged it along the road, it opened its mouth and said:

“He that eats whatever he likes and settles wherever it pleases him,
Must in the end, like thee, suffer that which will not please him.”

He that lives to his own liking, will die like thee—and behold what an end is thine:

When thou didst overstep thy limits thou didst in thy ignorance tread in blood.”—

Pride and arrogance thou shouldst scorn; thou shouldst follow the path of kindness and generosity.

He whose weight is equal to that of Mount Qāf²⁸ has less real strength than a single grain.

Hurt none and be forbearing, for thou wilt find no shorter way to salvation.’

(16) Story of the Prophet and the Abyssinian slave-girl²⁹

‘There is a tradition going back to Salmān that one day the world-illuminating leader was sitting down,

When an Abyssinian slave-girl with a face like indigo hurriedly entered the mosque.

Seizing Muṣṭafā's cloak she said: “Accompany me a little way.

I have a task which must be performed now and I have no master here to help me. What can I do?

[*Ro.* 171]

Thou art the friend of the friendless. I am friendless and distressed.”

As she spoke she moved briskly away pulling the Prophet after her by his cloak.

The Prophet breathed not a word but followed her without trying to disengage his cloak.

Because of his meekness the Prophet did not even ask whither she was taking him.

[*Ri. 213*]

He accompanied her cheerfully like a dumb person until she brought him to a corn-chandler.

Then she opened her mouth and said: "O Lord of the Age, my heart is burning from hunger.

I have woven this small quantity of wool. Take it and buy me some wheat."

The Prophet took the wool and bought the wheat which he lifted on to his shoulder

And carried to the slave-girl's house. Then he turned his blessed face towards the *qibla*³⁰

And said: "O Lord, if I have fallen short in my duty to Thy servant, pass over my fault.

If I did wrong in my thought or action, by Thy grace forgive me.

I bought some wheat for a slave-girl; out of meekness and forbearing I acted as a porter."

Such was his humility that he stood and prayed to God for forgiveness.

O noble man, behold generosity, look upon loyalty; open thy eyes and consider the meekness of Mohammed.

What can one expect of body and soul in such a situation? What can one expect of the vain and impure?"

(17) Story of the man who approached Faḍl the son of Rabī³¹

'A poor unfortunate old man approached Faḍl the son of Rabī' on some business.

Because of his shame and embarrassment, poverty, weakness and age, the old man in his distraught condition

Planted the sharp end of his staff on Faḍl's foot.

At once blood poured from his foot, and that noble minister turned red and then pale.

But he breathed not a word until the old man had finished speaking, then he graciously took the petition from him and signed it.

When the old man had departed, his heart filled with joy, Faḍl swooned with the pain of the wound.

[*Ri. 214*]

A noble asked him: "Why, O lord, didst thou put up with this pain?

An old man wounded thy foot and thou stoodst listening with sealed lips.

When the blood was flowing from thy foot, thou couldst have spoken,

for it might have been all over with thee."

[Ro. 172]

Faql replied: "I was afraid that the old man might have been embarrassed and confused,

And because he was alarmed by his blunder might not have presented his petition.

Since he was already so burdened with poverty, it was not right to put another load on his shoulders."—

What kindness, fidelity and forbearance: behold true loyalty, if thou have eyes to see.

Such generosity [*faql*] equal to a hundred springs [*rabi'*] comes from the grace of God, not from Faql the son of Rabi'.

Always thou art ignoble: if thou art a man learn to be noble.

Do not, O earth, seek to rise like fire; since thou art earth do not be fierce like fire.

If thou wouldst attain to that Presence, thou must be dust upon this Road.'

(18) Story of Buhlul³²

'Someone rode through Baghdad on a Rakhsh-like mount, behaving as though the world were his to give away.

Soldiers marched in front and behind leaving no room for passers-by.

On every side arose the cry of "Make way!": throughout the market place this cry arose.

As for Buhlul he picked up a handful of dust and went off and gazed upon it in secret,

Saying: "Such pride is not fitting in mere dust: the gentleman may be Pharaoh but he is not God."—

Thou hast learnt from the people of the market-place, who have set their snares for carrion.

When a man seeks naught but carrion, what has he to do with the secret mystery of sanctity?"

[Ri. 215]

(19) Story of the madman and the dandies³³

'A madman was sitting by the roadside when two or three rows of people passed by.

They were worldly people entirely preoccupied with their robes and turbans,

And in their foppishness, pride, arrogance and grandness were strutting along like so many partridges.

When that homeless madman beheld that self-satisfied crowd with their mincing gait,

In his disgust he pulled his shirt over his head until the road was cleared of those witless ones.

[*Ri. 173*]

When they had passed he put his head out again, and someone said to him: "O blameless man,

When thou sawest the faces of those dandies, why wert thou disturbed and coveredst thy head?"

He answered: "I covered my head because I felt the strong wind of their vanity

And I feared that the wind might sweep me away. When they had passed I uncovered my head again.

I smelt the stench of these dandies, and I could not endure it and so I covered my head."—

When thou foppishly deckest out thy seven members,³⁴ the world conceives only disgust for thee.

Those only who avoid this failing perform in the present world the task of the world to come.'

Discourse XIV

The son replied: 'If the water of life will not save me from dying, I must at least know what that water is.

Though I cannot drink from the fountain of life, yet the knowledge thereof will illuminate my heart.'

[*Ri. 216*]

Father's reply

The father, acting as guide, set him upon the road by relating this story:

(1) Death of Alexander¹

'Alexander read once in a book: "The water of life illuminates the heart.

Whoever drinks of it becomes like the sun and his life endures for ever.

There is also a drum and a box of collyrium which have a subtle effect.

I have heard from a learned master that that collyrium and that drum came from Hermes.²

[*Ro. 174*]

If anyone had a violent attack of colic, he would beat that drum and be relieved.³

And whoever applied that collyrium to his eyes could see from the Fish to the empyrean."⁴

Alexander conceived a strong desire to possess these three things.

He traversed the whole world at the head of a great host until finally one day he came to a mountain.

He dug into the mountain where there was a sign and after ten days and nights came upon a house.

He opened the door; there was a vault in the middle in which were the drum and the box of collyrium.

He applied the collyrium and his eyesight became such that at once the earth and the empyrean were visible to him.

An emir who was standing beside him struck his hand on the drum where it lay on the ground.

He broke wind loudly and in his shame he ruthlessly ripped the drum open.

Alexander held his peace, but none the less the mysterious drum was broken.

In search of the water of life he now went to India, to a region as dark as Saturn.⁵

[*Ri.* 217]

But why should I repeat this story? Thou hast heard it a hundred times.

When he was floundering in the darkness, both he and his army at their wits' end, there appeared an enormous ruby which dazzled the eyes of that startled man.

He beheld thousands of ants upon every side all moving in different directions.

He thought at first that the ruby had appeared to help him in his difficulties.

But there came a Voice saying: "This bright candle is burning for the host of ants,

So that by its light those who lose their way may know where they are."

Alexander's heart fell at the thought that the jewel was solely for the benefit of a few ants.⁶

He emerged from the darkness with bleeding heart, his mood constantly changing.

He travelled two stages instead of one and finally came to the land of Babylon.

Now it was written, as Alexander knew, that when he was about to die,

A breast-plate would be laid down as his pillow and he would be stretched upon a bed of iron,

In a room of which the walls would consist of men and the ceiling of red gold.

In Babylon he was struck down with the colic and because of the pain he alighted in the open country.

[*Ro.* 175]

He had not the patience to wait till his tent was pitched.

They spread a handsome coat of mail beneath him, sadly they placed his head upon their laps.

A group of soldiers stood around him, joining their golden shields together over his head.

Seeing himself in such a case Alexander saw his death revealed in that colic.⁷

[*Ri.* 218]

He wept abundantly but to what avail? Death, which respects no-one, was at his heels.

A sage, one of Plato's disciples and a favourite of Dhu'l-Qarnain,⁸

Sat down and said to the king of the world: "Thou didst leave that drum which Hermes made

In unworthy hands, therefore thou art afflicted with this disease.

If thou hadst shown it to no one, how couldst thou have been exposed to this suffering?

The conjunction under which that drum was made—when will it appear again?

Thou didst not appreciate its value and therefore thou didst overlook it.

Hadst thou prized it as thy life, thou mightest also have drunk a draught from that fountain.

And yet do not grieve. Listen to two pieces of advice which are better than drinking the water of life.

So great a realm and such vast power were dependent upon an unclean wind.

Consider whereon was founded the great realm in which thou didst live. Wherefore found a realm which, if it continue or not, is based upon wind?

Do not grieve or lose control of thyself because of it, for it is but a wind that escapes behind thee.

As for the water of life which thou wert seeking but of which thou now despairest,

Consider and do not twist about so much: it is solid knowledge and nothing else.

If such knowledge presents itself, it is the unadulterated water of life.

[*Ri. 219*]

God has given thee much such knowledge and now that thou knowest this thou mayst calmly meet thy end, free from all care."

When Alexander heard these words from the master, his heart bled, but he gladly gave up the ghost.—

Do thou not grieve either, O son, for that water is knowledge and the unveiling of mysteries.

If it shine upon thy soul thy heart will be able to see the two worlds.

[*Ro. 176*]

If thou find the road to knowledge and the essence of things, that is for thee the water of life.

And if thou do not find it thou wilt see only as Satan sees;

Thy miracles will appear like those of Satan and all thy light like darkness.'

(2) Story of Nimrod⁹

'A ship was wrecked and seven hundred persons were drowned and only one woman was saved.

The woman was left floating upon a plank, upon which she gave birth to a son.

When the distraught woman had laid down her burden she fell headlong into the sea.

The tiny babe was left on the plank and was borne hither and thither by wave after wave.¹⁰

There came a voice to the wind, the waves and the fishes saying: "This child is under divine protection.

See to it that it comes to no harm, for it must be made to reach its destined place."

All the angels said: "O God, who is this amongst the waves and the fishes?"

There came a Voice saying: "When the time comes, you shall know of this unfortunate one."

When finally the child was cast on the seashore it was discovered by a skilful fisherman,

Who fed it with milk and fowl and fish and reared it tenderly with the blood of his heart.¹¹

[*Ri. 220*]

When the boy grew up and knew his way about, he was walking one day along a road,

When he found a collyrium-box fashioned out of rubies, whereof the properties dazzled the intellect.

Having applied the pure collyrium to one eye he straightway beheld the empyrean, the firmament and the celestial spheres.

Applying it to the other eye he was able to descry all buried treasure throughout the world.

He saw thousands of treasures beneath the earth; his sight ranged from the Moon to the Fish's back.¹²

The angels all said: "O Pure One, what manner of servant is this with such vast perception?"

There came a Voice from the hidden, saying: "This proud man is Nimrod,

Who will boast of divinity and come with a hundred wiles against Us and engage Us in a battle."—

Behold how He raised him up in this way and then all of a sudden laid him low.

No one whatsoever in either world has insight into God's mysteries.

Why concern thyself with causes? Thou wilt see nothing but effects.

And if thou have all four humours¹³ there is no doubt that thou art of a crooked disposition and the four do not unite into one.

Enter this sea, plunge headlong into it; pass beyond causes and humours.

The day does not rise higher than the highest heaven, for it too must bow its head night and day.

Why ask about the things of the world? From the atom up to the sun, it is "as if it had not teemed only yesterday¹⁴".

The Milky Way shows that the revolving sphere itself has been broken; do not make haste lest thou be shattered into atoms.

The world has the revolving sphere saddled as its Rakhsh;¹⁵ its golden saddle is the sun.

When annihilation approaches the world and its sun becomes dark like night,

How, dost thou think, is this steed saddled in the west? Upside down.

[Ri. 221]

The sun is turned over so that this saddle need not be constantly turned around.

Heave a heart-rending sigh from thy bleeding soul for thou hast no knowledge of either night or day.

"Good night" they say to thee. But of what use to thee is a good night when thou hast never seen a bright day?

If thou wouldst be joyful night and day, never speak, as long as thou livest, of night or day.

But as long as thou livest, a prisoner in thyself, thou shalt not be otherwise than sore of heart.

Through ardour thou must become without self, pure of self and blind to the actions of self

For as long as thou seest self at work, though thou wear the *khirqā*¹⁶ thou seest it as a *zunnār*.

(3) Story of the man who gave alms to the poor¹⁷

'A pious man said: "My soul is filled with a longing, which has held me in bonds all my life,

That I might give alms to the poor without anyone's seeing."

He had uttered these few words, when there came a Voice from the unseen:

"If thou hast attained to certainty¹⁸ thou must not see thyself the alms thou givest.

[Ro. 178]

And if thou see them not at all, thou mayst say 'Let him see who will' and care not a whit."¹⁹

Thou art like one dead, and it seems evil to thee, but thou art a calamity to thyself alive or dead.

Thou wouldst not wish to live if thou knewest that death was better for thee than such a life.

If thou knewest and sawest more thou wouldst see the extent of thy insignificance.'

(4) Story of a lawful morsel²⁰

'A friend said to me: "Such-and-such a person has a good and lawful supply of worldly sustenance,

For he receives the poll-tax from the Jews and has his livelihood from it—who could fare better?"

[*Ri.* 222]

I answered: "I do not know about this, but this I know that I am a disgrace to the world

And that a hundred of the most abject Jews ought to exact a poll-tax from me."—

If thou sawest thy own insignificance thou wouldst consider a dog by far thy superior.

Thy existence is mixed up with non-existence: the latter is a hell and the former a paradise.

If there remains but one thread of that hell there will be many dogs tied up with it.

Though thou perform the ritual ablution a hundred times a day, since thou art with thyself, thou art not otherwise than ritually impure.'

(5) Story of the old woman and her advice to the shaikh²¹

'One day a pious divine filled with conceit and self-importance was seated in front of a *miḥrāb*.²²

There entered the mosque an old woman, her heart like the letter *alif*²³ but her form like the letter *dāl*.²⁴

She said to him: "Thou art utterly damned, for thou art unclean and yet layest claim to purity.

Because of thy title of shaikh thou art exalted in pride above thy companions. Withdraw, thou unclean one, from the *miḥrāb*."—

Consume thyself with love, O friend, otherwise thou art an ascetic in thy crudeness.

One must not look for maturity in an ascetic, for an ascetic is as crude as a baked brick.

In his tears and burning a lover is like a candle, united in his tears and burning.

[*Ro.* 179]

He burns and weeps all night because in the morning he will be put out like a candle.

When he has wept and burnt and been extinguished, he will bear the title of "Slain by the Beloved".

He will be united and joined to the Beloved behind the curtain and no one will have any more to do with him.'

[*Ri.* 223]

(6) Story of the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar and the young lover²⁵

'Fārūq²⁶ went to war and gained the victory, and to the infidels that fell into his power

He offered the faith of Islam. Those who accepted were spared, otherwise they were beheaded immediately.

A young man who had given his heart to his beloved was brought before 'Umar.

'Umar said to him: "Confess Islam." He answered: "I am a wretched lover."

'Umar went on: "Thy faith will save thee." The young man replied: "What is that to a lover?"

For the third time 'Umar called on him to accept Islam, but as before he confessed to his faith in love.

'Umar ordered him to be cruelly killed and his body cast abjectly in the dust.

When 'Umar came before Mohammed, someone told the Prophet of what had happened.

Hearing the tale he was sad and pensive and spoke thus to 'Umar:

"Hadst thou the heart, O 'Umar, thus cruelly to put to death a lover?

He was already dead from grief, and that is no mistake: it was not right to kill him again."—

To be slain by God is good but to be slain by thee is foul, for this is for hell but that for paradise.

If thou kill thyself it is not well; it is well only to be killed by Him.'

(7) Story of a dervish who wished for a deluge²⁷

'Someone asked one who was bold of speech at God's Court: "What dost thou wish for in this life?"

He answered: "I should like a deluge to carry off the people of this world,

So that no trace should remain of them and lands, people and monasteries, all should have disappeared.

So would these beings, wrapped up in their vain conceit, be delivered from polytheism and heresy.

[*Ri. 224*]

For since they do not give one moment's thought to God it would be better if they did not possess this world."

They said to him: "If there were such a deluge and the world came to an end for all these misguided people,

[*Ro. 180*]

If they were all destroyed thou too wouldst be destroyed with them."

He answered: "The deluge would be for my benefit, for my foremost desire is my own destruction.

If this deluge came to pass, I should wish to be the first to perish."

They said to him: "Come then, find some other means: cast thyself into the sea

And so achieve thy wish by freeing thyself from thy existence."

He answered: "It is very clear that any act of mine would be like me.

To bring about my own destruction would not be good, it is the Beloved that should destroy me."—

Whatever the Beloved does is right and proper, whatever the Lover does is feeble and futile.

If the Beloved sell thee or not, His action beseems Him, it would not beseem another.

Though thy heart's desire sell thee a hundred times, thou art every instant more eager to purchase him with thy life.'

(8) Story of the old man enamoured of a young washerman²⁸

'There was a handsome young man with the figure of a cypress, for love of whom a whole world of people had gone astray.

By trade he was a washerman but in fact all he did was to ravish hearts.

When he twisted his ringlets like the rings of mail he became as it were in the midst of his washing a man of war.

When he tied on his apron for work, though plunged in water he set the world on fire.

When he beat clothes upon a stone in the water it was as though he laid hold of the garments of his lovers.

They all of them turned their desire towards him, they became at once [like water] under his mill-stone.

[*Ri. 225*]

An old man became violently enamoured of him; for love of him his head whirled around like that of a compass.

To so pitiful a state was he reduced by that young man that his reason was changed into pure insanity.

For love of his face his back was bent double and his heart became a whirlpool in the sea of calamity.

In the end he entirely devoted himself to the young man; he performed all kinds of services for him.

If for one day he did not see his face anguish of his heart would utterly unman him.

Every day he would work for hire and at night would give the young man his wages.

Whatever he earned in this way he would give to that silver-breasted, self-intoxicated one:

[*Ro. 181*]

One day the youth said to the old man: "Thy ardour increases hourly, But so thou shall not have thy way, for I need much gold, I must have much gold. I am weary of these small amounts."

The old man answered: "Dear friend, I have no cash but a handful of veins and skin.

Sell me, take the gold and enjoy it; and forget this foolish fellow."

Straightway the young man carried him off to Cairo, where there was a slave-market,

In which, according to custom, there was a chair on which the vendor took his seat.

The young man sat down on it and the old man stood up in front of him.

Thus did that distraught old man (O wonder!) relate what happened: "I shall never forget the delight I felt.

Someone asked that young man, 'Is this thy slave here?'

And he answered from the chair: 'He is. Why dost thou ask?'

Dost thou know of a greater blessing than this, that thy Creator should call thee His slave?

Then through God thy heart becomes alive, and because thou shalt be His slave for ever with a hundred souls.²⁹

[*Ri. 226*]

It so happened that a man had died in Egypt, and his son, on the day of his death, had vowed

To free a slave upon his grave. He at once bought the old man and paid for him in gold.

He freed him upon his father's grave, gave him much gold and rejoiced his heart.

He said to him: "If thou so wish remain here. Our wealth will not be less because of thee.

Or if thou wouldst go to thy old master, depart for thou art free and the monarch of thyself."

The old man ran off and betook himself to the youth; he gave back his heart to the ravisher of hearts.

He never quit him for a moment, for he saw the whole world illuminated by his face.

He became famous for fidelity in love; he achieved his every wish.—

If thou be not faithful in love, thou art in love only with thyself.

Perfect love for the Beloved must be such that if thy soul scatter pearls [of eloquence] during a whole lifetime.

And utter secrets every moment concerning the Beloved, thou shouldst then consider that it has only just begun.'

[Ro. 182]

(9) Story of Majnūn and his questioner³⁰

'Thus said the incomparable Majnūn: "In the whole of my life only one person has done me justice.

The rest were such as have not found salvation and used to reproach me for my love.

But a woman came to me," he said, "one day, when my lap was filled with blood and my breast with sorrow.

Seeing me lying amidst dust and blood with my head hanging downwards like the heavens,

She said to me: 'Why art thou thus, lying in ashes and soaked in blood?'

I answered: 'I have seen Lailā, and have sold my reason and bought ignominy.

[Ri. 227]

I am thus because of my love for Lailā; because of my love for her I am left without heart or faith.'

The woman said: 'Poor distraught Majnūn, I have just come from Lailā.

Since her beauty is such as it is thou wilt never recover.

Thou must suffer more than this. What is this after all? Thou must die, what is a grievous heart?

For love of such as she thou shouldst be like no lover in the whole world,

Because for the love of such a face thou shouldst become like a hair in a ringlet of her hair.'

I perceived in that woman a true manliness; and I approved of the just words that she spoke."—

The tale of love and the heart is a strange affair; they are two things united into one.

To speak of love and the heart is a dangerous matter; perhaps thou canst speak of them on the gallows, that is the right place.

O cupbearer, thou knowest that my heart is bleeding. Do not speak of the heart—whatever else thou wilt.'

(10) Story of the fox that was caught in a trap³¹

'A fox was caught one morning in a trap, and as it lay there it sought to devise some fox-like trick,

Thinking: "If the hunter finds me thus, he will straightway deliver my hide to the tanner."

It pretended to be dead; in fear for its life it stretched itself out on the ground.

When the hunter came along he thought the fox was dead and not wishing to abandon it altogether

[Ro. 183]

He cut off one of its ears saying: "Perhaps the ear will be of some use to me."

[Ri. 228]

The fox said to itself: "No matter. Since thy life is safe thou canst dispense with one ear."

Someone else came along and said: "The animal's tongue will be of some use to me."

And he straightway cut out the fox's tongue, and for fear of its life it uttered not a moan.

Yet another person said: "Its teeth would be most useful to me."

It breathed not a sound when the iron was thrust in its mouth and several of its teeth wrenched out.

It said to itself: "If I but survive I can do without teeth, ears or tongue."

But yet another person came and said: "My choice is the heart, for a fox's heart is useful against a certain illness."

When it heard the word 'heart' from afar, the world grew dark in front of its eyes.

It said to itself: "The heart is not to be trifled with; I must devise some trick to save myself."

So saying, by a hundred wiles and artifices it leapt out of the trap as an

arrow leaps from the bow.—

The tale of the heart is very wonderful, for it comprehends the two worlds.

Wouldst thou drown me in my own blood? Do not tell the tale of the heart, for all else thou mayst do or not.

Tell me since my heart is already bleeding. But what shall I say of the heart? What can I tell the indifferent about the heart?

My heart is where the Beloved is, but how shall I reach it there? How shall I accomplish this?

My heart is lost, it has disappeared from sight; I know nothing of my heart nor my heart of me.

Having lost all trace of my heart how should I find any trace of my Sweetheart?

[*Ri.* 229]

(11) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz³²

‘One day the Sultan of the Faith Maḥmūd said to his own Ayaz: “O heart-illuminating one,

Whom dost thou know from the Moon to the Fish, that has a greater kingdom than I?”

His slave replied: “O mighty king, my realm is a hundred times greater than thine,

Though mine is hidden beneath a signet-ring, though thine extends over the whole earth.”

The king said to that loved one: “O slave, what proof hast thou of this?”

Ayaz opened his mouth and answered: “O king, why dost thou ask seeing that thou already knowest?

Although thou art king, yet the king over thee is thy heart.

[*Ri.* 184]

And thy heart is subject to this slave of thine; and so my sovereignty is complete.

Thou art now king, and thy heart is thy king, but I am the king that has vanquished thy heart.

The very heavens must envy me for I shall for ever be king of the king.

Though thy sway be absolute yet true empire belongs to thy Ayaz.”

Since the essence of thee is thy heart and thou hast no heart, of what use is thy empire?”

(12) Story of Muḥammad the son of 'Īsā³³ and the mad woman³⁴

'Muḥammad b. 'Īsā, who in wit excelled all the other couriers of the Caliph,

Was riding along on a Rakhsh-like horse holding tight on the jewel-studded reins,

Escorted by slaves on horseback. All Baghdad stood and watched.

[*Ri.* 230]

In every corner people asked "Who is the man with all this show and finery?"

An old woman came hobbling along on her staff. She asked "Who is this distressful wretch,

Whom God has banished from his presence and driven away by guile?

For had not God deposed him He would not have caused him to concern himself with such idle things."

Attentively he listened to these words and humbly dismounting from his horse

Confessed that his state was such as the old woman had described it.

Having said this he trod the path of repentance and turned his back upon wealth and power,

Convinced of his own lowliness he retired into a corner and became a man of religion.—

Thou hast played the great man, and yet in secret thou art a beggar; thou dost not know how to be a great man.

Having not the smallest control over thyself thou canst not give the smallest coin to the poor.

And being unable to control thyself how canst thou then control others?"

(13) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd sitting alongside a madman³⁵

'Maḥmūd sat down beside a madman, who closed his eyes. The king was angry

[*Ro.* 185]

And said: "Why dost thou do this?" He answered: "In order not to see thy face." The king cried out:

"Dost thou not hold it lawful to look at the king of the world?" He answered: "Nor to look at myself either,

For according to our belief it is unlawful to look at oneself, and if thou look at another it is nothing but sin."

The king said to him: "I am the ruler of the world: whatever decree I

may issue concerning thee will be carried out."

The madman answered: "Consider this well. Having no control over thyself

[*Ri. 231*]

Thou canst not exercise control over others. Leave me in peace! Enough of these excuses!"—

Art thou not ashamed of thy status of a great man, which thou has built up over a lifetime in little measures of two maunds apiece?

He only is his own true master who seeks neither to save nor to destroy himself.

Dost thou not know, O hypocrite, that thou art crooked? Why dost thou pretend to be honest and straightforward?

(14) Story of the madman who sold a rug³⁶

'A man of distraught soul had a rug which he offered to a man for sale.

The man said to him: "This rug is very rough: in softness it is like a porcupine's back."

The man bought it cheap and then a customer appeared along the road,

Who said to him: "Hast thou a soft rug?" He answered: "I have if thou have gold to offer."

When the poor man produced his gold, the man spread out the rug in front of him,

Saying: "It is a rug without its equal, for in softness it is identical with silk."

A Šūfī had been watching the man and had heard all that had been said in the purchasing and selling of the rug.

He let out a cry and said: "O man without compare, lay me in this coffer of thine,

In which a rug turns into pure silk and a lump of clay into a precious pearl.

For I in my nature am like so much clay—perhaps in thy coffer my condition would be changed."—

If thy condition do not change, thy life will be nought but calamity.

[*Ro. 186*]

If thou pass thy life in darkness, thou shall be no different from an animal, for thou shalt be ignorant.

Confine thy limbs in the bonds of religion: if thou wouldst become thus do this.

[*Ri. 232*]

Neither see, hear nor speak except in accordance with the Commandment, so that thou mayst not, O Muslim, die an unbeliever.

I do not perceive thee striving after guidance and I fear greatly lest thou shouldst die an unbeliever:

This vault and this palace are intended as a warning to thee, but like an animal thou feelest only thy appetites.

Thou art in a market in which thou couldst always make a profit on thy soul. Why must thou always make a loss?’

(15) Story of the woman who was circumambulating the Ka’ba and the man who was looking at her³⁷

‘A woman was circumambulating the House of God when a man cast a glance at her face.

The woman said to him: “If thou wert a true believer, how couldst thou concern thyself with me at such a moment?

But, impotent wretch that thou art, thou dost not know Whom thou hast forgotten in this place.

Hadst thou any trace of manhood, thou wouldst have no time to think of a woman here:

Thou camest hither for profit; it was not for loss that thou camest hither.

Dost thou look for loss in so brisk a market? Hast thou no shame before God?”—

The Lord of the World is always watching. Thou art absent from Him, but He is present with thee.

Since God is aware of thee every moment, why, like a snake, dost thou twist away from the road?

Since God is with thee everywhere, take no step except in His presence.

If thou take one step along the road without Him, thou must experience much confusion there.’

(16) Story of Mahsatī³⁸ the scribe and Sultan Sanjar³⁹

‘Mahsatī the scribe, that woman of pure essence, was a favourite of Sanjar.

Although her face was not like the moon⁴⁰ yet the king had an attachment to her.

[*Ri.* 233]

One night she was in the meadows of Rādkān⁴¹ before the Khusrau-like Sanjar.

When one watch of the night had passed King Sanjar retired to bed.

Mahsatī left the king and departed to her own private tent.

[*Ro.* 187]

Now Sanjar had a slave as cupbearer, who was perfect in his beauty,
And to that beauty he united charm. The king had his enjoyment of
both qualities.

He was enamoured of him with a hundred hearts: he was a rival of
Mahsatī, but really as handsome as the moon.⁴³

The king awoke from his sleep and looked for him; and not seeing him
he went in search of that ruby-lipped one.

Flinging a night garment about him and brandishing in anger an
Indian blade,

He entered his tent and saw that Mahsatī was there with the moon-
like⁴³ one,

The cupbearer seated beside her and Mahsatī gazing lovingly at that
moon-faced one.

She was playing a sad love melody and sweetly singing these words:

"I shall embrace thee on the edge of the field, even though tonight I
must spin for others."

Perceiving the state of affairs Sanjar committed these words to memory.

He said to himself: "If I now rush into the tent with my Indian sword

They will both of them die of fright and I shall be guilty of the two
wretches' death."

He was embarrassed and in the end hurried off to his own tent.

[*Ri.* 234]

When ten days had passed he prepared a world-illuminating feast.

Mahsatī played the harp before the Sultan; she played a very high-
pitched melody.

The cupbearer too was standing nearby, a cup in his hand and with
downcast eyes.

The king remembered the verse he had heard that other night; affecting
a natural tone of voice he asked her to sing it.

When Mahsatī heard this verse from the king's lips, the harp fell from
her lap to the ground.

She began to tremble like a leaf, she swooned and her senses were
caught in a snare.

The king went and sat at her pillow and sprinkled rose-water on her
face.

When she recovered consciousness she was again filled with fear of
Sanjar.

And when she had ten times lost and recovered consciousness she still
could not collect her senses together again.

The king said to her: "If thou art afraid of me, thy life is safe, O enemy
to thyself."

She answered: "I do not fear this but one night I was practising that
verse.

[Ro. 188]

All night long I repeated it, sometimes to my liking and sometimes not.

Now I am reminded of that night and the world is closing around me [like a prison].

It seems as though one night, when I was thus employed, thou wert secretly watching me.

If thou now seize me or drive me from thee, thy heart will not suffer it and thou will call me back.

Even if thou kill me whilst I am still sound of limb, it will serve but to free me from the clutches of existence.

Why my fear is so great is because the Sultan, who is the supporter of the world,

Is with me every moment of my life—and see how I am employed every moment!

And if God confront me with all my secret thoughts over a hundred years, what shall I then say or do?"—

[Ri. 235]

Since God sees thee constantly day and night, be of good cheer, smile while thou burnest, like a candle.

Do not breathe a single breath without thanking Him: breathe not a single breath in forgetfulness.

If thou strive all thou canst to thank Him, thou shalt receive thy reward from the divine bounty.'

(17) Story of Maḥmūd and the counting of elephants⁴⁴

'One day Maḥmūd, the binder of his foes, said to his son: 'O my discerning child,

See how many elephants I now have, for I do not know their number."

His son counted them and answered: "Sire, one thousand four hundred are in thy chains."

Said the king: "I remember the time when I did not possess a single goat,

And now though my power extends to the empyrean, it is not through my doing but through the grace of God."—

Since God's benefits to thee are infinite, thou must needs show thy gratitude to thy Benefactor.

Since God's benefits to thee are continuous, thou mayst not breathe a single breath without thanking Him.

And if thy carnal soul neglect to thank Him, thy heart must resolve this problem

And if it be ever thus negligent, thy heart must strive and endeavour the more.

The more active thy carnal soul the weaker will thy heart be in its efforts.

If good brings profit and evil loss, it is because everyone spends what he has.'

(18) Story of Jesus and the Jews⁴⁵

'Jesus the Pure was walking along a street when he was shamelessly insulted by the Jews,

[Ro. 189]

[Ri. 236]

And that pure-born one prayed, with cheerful face, for their welfare.

Someone said to him: "Art thou not disturbed by their insults that thou shouldst pray for them?"

The Messiah answered: "Every heart that has a soul gives what it has of its own."—

Whatever the coin in the sea of thy soul its waves will wash up no other kind.

But until thy last breath is spent the coin within shall not be revealed to thee.

Men's souls shall be tested only then when the blind shall recover their sight.

It is today that thou shouldst concern thyself about tomorrow; thy heart should be consumed with fear thereof.

Thou must die a hundred times every instant in order to be able to traverse that valley.

Though fire rain down upon thee from the clouds, thou should remain of good heart.

If thou remain of good heart at the moment of death thou shalt be warmer from the truth than from the fire.'

(19) Story of the thief who was caught⁴⁶

'A thief was suddenly captured and borne off from the dust of the road straight to the gallows.

Humbly he begged for a respite that he might perform the ritual ablutions and offer up this prayer:

"O Lord, at such a time and place when I see a calamity in every hair of my head,

Behold what the sword of Thy wrath is inflicting upon me here on the gallows

While Thou hast thus stunned me with Thy wrath, I bid farewell to life filled with love for Thee.

I am as I have said and Thou art so. Now I render up my soul, the rest Thou knowest.”—

So render up thy soul if render it thou must, otherwise thou hast forfeited thy life for nothing.

[*Ri.* 237]

Even though thy blood is boiling because of His wrath never forget to think kindly of Him.

Step briskly, for slowness will not advance thee; step gladly, for sadness is of no avail.

The wedding-feast of this world is not worth a mourning, for a hundred of its joys are not worth one sorrow.

Since the heavens will unhorse thee in the end, ride whilst thou canst with eyes wide open.’

[*Ro.* 190]

(20) Story of the madman who rode on a stick⁴⁷

‘A madman mounted a stick and galloped along as though it were a fully harnessed horse.

His mouth was smiling like a rose in full bloom; like a nightingale he was bubbling over with song.

Someone asked him: “O man of God, why dost thou gallop so briskly along the road?”

He answered: “I wish for a moment to ride in the arena of this world, For when my hands are bound and helpless [in the tomb], not a single hair on my body will be able to move.”—

Whilst thou art still active in this arena, play thy part to the full.

Since thou hast knowledge of neither past nor future, thou hast no ready cash but thy present life.

Do not waste this cash upon credit, for no one ever built upon credit.

While one point of thy life still remains thou shouldst compass-like draw a thousand circles around it.

Enjoy the cash in hand like a “man of the moment”;⁴⁸ do not, like the idle, now advance and now withdraw.

If thou now advance and now withdraw, thou art thyself a danger to thy life.’

[Ri. 238]

(21) Story of the general who had built a castle and the madman⁴⁹

'A general built a lofty castle in a certain place.

A madman happened to pass by and the general summoned him before him

And said: "See what a castle this is! In loftiness it is equal to the inverted vault.

Behold how it wards off calamities from those whom it protects."

At once that madman opened his mouth and said: "Thou art in a state of darkness,

For misfortunes fall from the heavens, and thou goest up in thy castle to meet them."—

Thou art thyself thy own complete misfortune; do not, O friend, seek other misfortunes also.

Thou shalt be entirely free from thyself and thy misfortune

Only when thou art humble and lowly and cease to live in order to become really existent.'

[Ro. 191]

(22) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the suppliant⁵⁰

'Maḥmūd was riding along one morning when someone approached him seeking justice.

Crying out he barred the king's way and then seized the reins of his horse.

When he seized his reins the King of the Age struck the back of his hand with his whip.

From the pain in his hand the poor man collapsed on the road with a hundred lamentations.

Seeing him thus afflicted the king from pity reined in his horse.

Someone said: "O king, when that suppliant seized thy reins,

Thou didst not then rein in thy horse. Why hast thou done so now?"

The king replied: "I was drunk at the time when he seized the reins with one hand

Now every hair of this suppliant is a hand with a tight grip upon me.

[Ri. 239]

Seeing so many hands upon my reins how can I urge on my horse even if I wished?

I am the prisoner of all these hands and do not know how to escape from them."—

Since to fall in this road is to man's advantage, all fall here that suffer the pain.

Since greatness is accounted base upon this road, one may seize the king's bridle without hands.

A man must be bathed in blood a hundred times before he knows what it is to fall.

He that lives in ease and comfort, how shall he be saved even though the door is open ?

(23) Story of Majnūn⁵¹

'Someone said to Majnūn: "How is it that thou art so weak and wretched ?"'

He answered: "I am an old donkey with holes in my back from crushing loads.

Though my body is feeble and emaciated yet every day it must carry the same heavy load.

And if after a hundred toils the saddle-cloth is removed from my back for a while so that I may take some rest,

Thousands of gadflies come and bite me, plunging their stings in my sores;

So that I say: 'Would that this poor wretch had never known the honour of such rest!'"—

If thou have suffered upon the road, thou wilt have many times been afflicted in this way.

[Ro. 192]

But if thou have not so suffered to the extreme, thou wilt laugh heartily at this story.

And if thou art given to luxury and prosperity what shouldst thou know about suffering ?

[Ri. 240]

I need someone who has suffered, who has mourned himself a hundred times a day;⁵²

Who is alive in God and dead to himself, who is not one of those who remain behind but has gone before.

Until thou art the lover that stakes his very life, thou shalt not discover the secret of those who suffer.

He that lives in the midst of luxury can know nothing of lovers ready to sacrifice their very lives.'

(24) Story of the salt-seller who became enamoured of Ayaz⁵³

'There was a young man who wandered around as a salt-vendor.

He would run around the whole of the town crying his wares in every alley.

One day he caught sight of the heart-ravishing Ayaz and he was consumed from head to foot with passion.

The world grew dark before him because of his love, but it was clear that that darkness came from that moon.

And yet how can the world be darkened by the moon until it has caused the heart to bleed a hundred times?

Night and day, with bleeding heart, he would sit like a drunkard on the threshold of the palace,

In the dust of the road with his salt set out in front of him.

He was not without salt in his love for that moon, for some of his salt had spilt and fallen on the road.

Now he would give out a pitiful cry, now he would become as restless and agitated as a flame of fire.

When the silver-breasted Ayaz passed by he would drown himself in tears.

He would fall forward and his senses would leave him; and in his senseless state it was as though the soul were concealed from the body.

[*Ri. 241*]

They told Maḥmūd about the passion of that misguided, bewildered man.

For a while he bowed his head, now groaning, now burning like aloes-wood.

He said to himself: "This man has exceeded his bounds, for it is not good to share either love or wealth."

At once he sent for him and the pedlar appeared with his salt on his head.

Maḥmūd opened his mouth and said to him: "O pedlar, accept a piece of good advice.

Forsake thy love for this idol-faced love of mine or else forsake thy life."

The lover answered: "O king, thou art on thy throne whilst I am standing in the road.

[*Ro. 193*]

Thou hast Ayaz always in thy possession, whilst I have only the tale of him.

In the midst of all thy splendour, luxury and royal pomp thou hast him that thou wishest sitting in front of thee.

Since thou possessest that idol what then am I seeking? Since he is with thee whom then should I forsake?

I am in love with him always; the flame is ever burning in my soul.

If my love for him does not increase every instant, yet my faith and belief is in nought but self-sacrifice.

And since my love for him kills me a hundred times a day, I shall not fear if the king kills me also.

For the lover never trembles for his life, for in his eyes it is not worth one barleycorn."

The king replied: "O thou who art all disgrace from head to foot, how canst thou put thyself on an equal footing with me?"

Thou canst never engage in the market of love. What capital hast thou to invest in that market?"

The pedlar answered: "Thou hast not this capital at all, but I have it.

Thou, with thy worldly pomp, art like a pot crammed with food but without salt, however much thou wishest for it.

Since I have salt, why dost thou attack me? Why boast so much of thy own saltless love?

[*Ri. 242*]

Thou hast wealth, empire, gold and power, but thou shouldst have salt like me if thou feelest the agitation of love."

The king said: "Produce thy arguments, O lover. I have found thee unworthy of being a lover."

The pedlar answered: "I have no fear of producing arguments or of being a lover.

Thou canst not forget that thou art king; because of thy sovereignty thou canst not give thyself to love.

As for me, for love of thy Ayaz I cannot for a single moment concern myself with worldly matters.

Because of him I do not concern myself with the two worlds; thou, because of a hundred reasons, dost not concern thyself with him.

Behold now thy love and mine; observe the difference between this pedlar and thyself!"

Said the king: "Wretched pedlar, which part of him dost thou love?"

He answered: "I do not dare to think of my love for that idol.

It is impossible. How should I ever make love to any part of that idol?

For if I see but one hair of his head, every hair of my own scatters fire like a volcano.

I cannot bear to look on any part of him; how then should I look him over from head to feet?"

Said the king: "Since thou lovest no part of him from head to feet,

Why art thou so agitated with love for him? Tell me the reason for this love."

[*Ro. 194*]

He answered: "My soul is filled with tumult. Dost thou know why? It is because of the pearl in his ear.

When I see the ring in his ear I could give my life for it.

I am not worthy to love that idol, I am fit only to love the pearl in his ear."

Said the king: "He that found that pearl, did he find it in the sea of the body or the sea of the soul?"

[*Ri.* 243]

The pedlar answered: "Such a pearl came only from the sea of love.

If thou plunge into the sea of love, thou shalt be the sole owner of that pearl."

Said the king: "How then, good friend, can one dive into this sea?"

The pedlar answered: "Thou with thy elephants and armies, thy lands and territories stretching from East to West,

Thou canst not dive into this sea. It must be a man all alone,

Who utterly rejecting the two worlds plunges headlong into this sea

And holding his breath and washing his hands of his life seeks this pearl upon the sea-bed.

Thou hast conquered the whole world but thou shalt never find a trace of this pearl."

Said the king: "The sultan did not exert himself and he obtained a pearl such as thou speakest of without any effort.

See! Here is the pearl in Ayaz's ear, it is the ring in the ear of my slave.

I acquired such a pearl straightway without needing to plunge into the sea.

Continue thy drudgery, for this pearl belongs to me; the pearl for me and the whirlpool for thee!"

The pedlar answered: "Reflect a little. When didst thou ever acquire a pearl?

For this pearl would be thine if it were in the royal ear.

Since it is not in thy ear, O haughty king, what is it to thee? Speak no more of it.

If, as lord of the world, thou wert a true lover, the ring would be in the king's ear, not the slave's.

But the lover rises gaily up to 'Aiyūq whilst he places the ring in the ear of the beloved!

[*Ri.* 244]

If thou art a lover, do not boast so much; the ring ought to be in *thy* ear.

Since thou hast not that ring in thy ear, breathe not a word of love if thou be wise."

From shame the king almost sweated blood; he descended from his throne and withdrew.

The attendants drove out the pedlar with his salt; I do not know whether they took his words to heart.'

[Ro. 195]

Discourse XV

There came the fifth wise son of the king. He said to his father: 'O sea of mysteries,

I wish in all sincerity to possess that ring to which Solomon owed his empire,

Which brought the peris and *divs* under his sway and made the whole world into a tapestry on the gates of his palace.

By the name on that signet-ring, and by that alone, there were revealed to him the secrets of the ants and the speech of the birds.¹

Can I but lay my hands on that ring, then the celestial sphere itself, for all its loftiness, will seem to me to be low.'

Father's reply

His father said: 'What wouldst thou with sovereignty which, if thou obtain it, is not enduring?

As thou knowest, it is better to forgo such sovereignty, for it is transitory.

And if in thy kingdom thou art a tyrant and permittest acts of tyranny,

Thou shalt on the Day of Judgment be given the shape of an ant because of thy oppression when thou wert king;

Thou shalt raise a whole host of enemies against thee by eating a single loaf of thy daily bread.²

The whole world being a vale of sorrow, a handful of dust or wind,

[Ri. 245]

Do not be deluded by this kingdom of dust and wind and so involve thy soul in perdition.

Who can enjoy a life of which the end is bitter death?

The world is full of a divine antidote: do not kill thyself with the poison of kingship.

Although Rustam's heart grew faint, what use was the antidote when his son was dead?³

Seek, my son, that other kingdom in which thou mayst have to cut off thy son's head.

All those kings who ruled the world and rubbed their heads against the revolving cupola

Were secure in their kingdom only with the support of a piece of leather.

They all reposed beneath a piece of leather called "the standard of Kāva"⁴.

Why wilt thou not renounce a kingdom which rests upon a piece of leather?

[Ro. 196]

If kingship depends upon this leather standard, it will satisfy only the cobbler.

As for me I should be ashamed to boast of a kingdom founded on leather.

When the secret of things is revealed, there is many a piece of iron that will turn to wax before the bellows.

In that place in which reason will be dumbfounded the mountains will become "like flocks of carded wool".⁵

The kingdom of this world is very fleeting, for if thou look well, the [true] kingdom is the world to come.

Happy Adam who received the messenger of love and for a single grain of wheat turned his back upon the kingdom of Paradise!

If thou wouldst achieve eternal kingship, thou must be content in this world with a round loaf of bread just as the sun is content with its own round shape.'

[Ri. 246]

(1) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd when hunting⁶

'When Maḥmūd was out hunting he strayed off to one side and became separated from his retinue.

He saw a village nearby with smoke rising from one part of it.

He rode quickly on towards the village and beheld an old woman sitting in front of a fire.

He said to her: "The Caliph has come as thy guest—what art thou cooking, good woman?"

The old woman replied: "I am boiling myself beans [*mulk*],⁷ O king."

The king said to her: "Old woman, wilt thou give me some beans?" She answered: "Never!

I am boiling the beans for myself: I will not sell my beans [*mulk*] for thy kingdom [*mulk*].

I will never buy thy *mulk* for my *mulk* is a hundred times better than thine.

A whole world of foes threaten thy *mulk*; I am content with my *mulk* free from that anxiety."

Looking at the old woman's *mulk* the king wept bitterly over his own.

In the end he received a handful of beans from the old woman; he gave her a purse and quickly went his way.—

Since every grain must be accounted for, O rich man, there is no kingdom greater than the old woman's.

Although Rustam is perfect yet he aspires to the old woman's kingdom.⁸

What is the Way? It is to see the true road, to travel light and to do no harm,

To fill thy belly with a handful of beans, to make little of royalty and pomp.

[Ro. 197]

There is no empire today that will not decline. What does thou seek, since there is no perfection?

[Ri. 247]

Perfection is not possible in this world. Even the moon is not exempt from decline.

First it waxes for two weeks, then for two weeks it is on the wane.

From this parable thou shalt now learn that thou shalt always be imperfect even if thou become a moon.

Nothing is enduring here below; whether thou art mighty or humble, it is all one.

Since the kingdom of this world will not endure, why seek stability where there is none?

(2) Story of the shaikh and the *humā*⁹

'An experienced shaikh was walking along when he came upon an arch that had been erected over the roadway,

On top of which, fashioned in plaster, was a *humā* with outspread wings.

He said: "Ill-omened bird, thou hast made thy shameless appearance in this place.

How long will thou continue to spread thy wings over one man's head and then depart to settle on the castle of another?

No one will ever receive true protection from thee, for inconstancy is thy stock-in-trade."—

If the world were meant to endure, all would be plain and clear to the spirit and the soul.

But in fact the whole world appears like a mirage and dominion over it like a dream.

Thy donkey is stuck all the faster in the mud because in the interpretation of dreams the donkey stands for luck.

And since a donkey stands for Man's luck here below, there is no question but that he is in evil case.

If thou lift the sieve of thy conceit from the water thou wilt see that the world is nought but a dream.'

[*Ri.* 248]

(3) Story of Muḥammad Ghazzālī and Sultan Sanjar¹⁰

'Ghazzālī said to Sanjar: "O king, in this life thou canst be only in one of two conditions.

Either thou art awake when thou sittest down, in which case when thou closest thy eyes, thou shalt see nothing,

[*Ro.* 198]

Or thou art asleep, in which case thou shalt see nothing of this empire until thou openest thy eyes.

What pride or joy canst thou have in a realm of which, when thou hast shut thy eyes,

Thou canst see no trace in the world? It is less than nothing and even that thou canst not see.

If thou art King Yazdijird¹¹ himself, thou shalt be killed in the end in a mill.

And if thou do not know of this mill, take a look at this curved wheel.

When thou hast fallen into this curved wheel thou shalt find thyself in the end under the millstone.

In that fire incense and grass are all one; thou wilt sleep at night whether thou art king or beggar."'

(4) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the man who was his namesake¹²

'Maḥmūd was journeying with an army across the plain towards a place as high as the heavens.

He was sending soldiers hurrying in every direction to find game in the desert,

When he caught sight of a sad old man, bent of back, with bare head and feet, his face covered with dust;

He was gathering wormwood and heaving sighs as he made his way through the thorns.

The king went up to him and said: "Speak, good man, and tell me thy name."

He answered: "My name is Maḥmūd. I am thy namesake—what more could I wish?"

[*Ri.* 249]

Said the king: "I am left in some doubt. Thou art a Maḥmūd and I am one.

Thou art one Maḥmūd and I am another—how should we both be equal?"

The old man answered: "O king, when we have both finished the journey,

First we shall descend two ells underground and then as Maḥmūds we shall be equal.

Though I am not thy equal now because I am a small man, I shall be thy equal then when I have died.

Rejoice and ascend thy throne: the blue canopy will turn the wood of it into the plank on which thy dead body shall be washed.

Why build thy kingdom in a world in which thou canst not be happy for an instant;

Where thou canst not walk alone along a road and where thou canst do nothing without an army;

Where thou canst not drink water without a taster nor sleep at night without a guard?

Why concern thyself so much about a kingdom in which thou canst not even eat bread [in peace]?

Though thy throne be of ivory like the Kayānids' and thy crown loftier than Nūshīrvān's,

[*Ro.* 199]

Of that throne and that crown thy share will be nought but a handful of dust.

What kingdom is this and what king art thou canst not stand up to the Angel of Death?"—

If one loaf a day is enough for thee it is wrong to ask for two.'

(5) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the washerman¹³

'Maḥmūd, the Master of the World, was riding along the road when he saw a washerman busy with his work,

With a pile of linen folded up beside him. He said to him: "How much for all this linen?"

[*Ri.* 250]

The washerman replied: "O king of kings, ten ells of linen are enough for thee here below,

And since ten ells are enough for thee, why ask the price of it all?"

On hearing these words, the king wept. Then he came upon a poor brickmaker,

His cheeks turned to charcoal by the sun, his bricks spread out all over

the desert road.

The king said to him: "How much for all thy bricks?" He answered: "Ten are enough for thee.

And since ten are sufficient for thy purpose, it is wrong for thee to ask for them all.

Whether thou be fair or foul, more than ten ells of linen or ten bricks will be thy bane.

These two amounts thou wilt take with thee out of this world: more than this is pure ostentation.

If thou hast had some profit from thy efforts, consider the world a puff of smoke that has blown towards thee.

Forsake thy ill-omened carnal desires and make thy peace with wisdom; bid farewell to thy kingdom and look to thy own interests.

Thy kingdom will last only for a moment; perform some good work, for thou hast not even that moment."

When the king heard these two men's words, he at once threw himself in the dust.

He wept bitterly until he swooned away. In the end he rewarded those two men.

He gave much gold to his two benefactors, then returned to the town and related the story.—

Since these two things only shall be thy lot, what wouldst thou of this carrion-filled abode?

If thou be as powerful as the Bahrām¹⁴ of the skies, on the Last Day thou shalt be Bahrām Gūr.¹⁵

And though thou shine through the curtain like a ruby, thou shalt in thy coffin be Bahrām Chūbīn.¹⁶

[Ri. 251]

Beware, O Gūr-Khān,¹⁷ of the grave, for sleep thou must. Why make excuses?

Conquer thy pride lest this wicked world make thee prisoner of thyself.'

[Ro. 200]

(6) Story of the sage and Dhu'l-Qarnain¹⁸

'Dhu'l-Qarnain came upon a sage. That man of God said to him:

"How long wilt thou wander round the world filling it all with confusion?"

Alexander replied: "I have put to rights one half of the climes and the other half still remains.

And I am now going to quell that other half."

Said the sage: "Thou art not doing right: thou oughtest rather to conquer thy pride.

Thou knowest that thou must rise again. Therefore conquer thy pride—how canst thou conquer the world?"—

If thou art like a lion in battle, thou shalt be an ant when thou enterest the grave.

Thy stay in this world is of short duration, but thou shalt be a hundred thousand years in the grave.

Why build thy house in this world? It would be better if thou wert to build it in the grave.

Though like Chosroes thou erect a heart-delighting archway¹⁹ it shall not in the end be spared from ruin.

Dost thou not see how those stars, although they rule their own houses in the heavens,

Wander bewildered and filled with sorrow, from house to house day and night?

Seeing those houses to be nought but snares they cannot tarry for a moment in any of them.

Though they become lofty kings yet in one house they will be check-mated.

Thou too, if thou build a house in this world, shalt die in it all of a sudden like a silkworm in its cocoon.

[*Ri.* 252]

Thy load, O fool, is very heavy. In the end thy house will come down on top of thee.

Neither rejoice if thou inhabit a fine abode nor be sad if thou dwell in a ruin.

For thou shalt remain neither sad nor joyful; both joy and sadness will pass like the wind.'

(7) Story of the king and the ring²⁰

'There was a pious king whose realm extended over the whole world.

There was not his equal anywhere, for he received tribute from every side.

His kingdom stretched from the Moon to the Fish; from East to West was his empire.

To the sages that served him and were pensioners at his court

[*Ro.* 201]

He said one day (strange to relate!): "A melancholy mood has come over me.

A strange desire has risen in my heart, I do not know why.

Make me a ring of pure metal such that whenever I am very sad,
I may be happy when I look at it and be freed from the clutches of the Turk Grief;

And if I rejoice because of my good fortune, when I look at it I may be exceedingly sad."

The sages asked for a little time. Those wise and noble men sat down together

And pondered and reflected shedding tears of blood.

Finally they reached agreement and decided upon a ring

Upon which should be engraved the inscription: "In the end this too will pass away." —

Since the kingdom of this world is but transitory, whoever is truly alive departs to the kingdom of the other world.

If thou wouldst have that kingdom, sacrifice this one: follow the example of Ibrāhīm b. Adham.'

[*Ri.* 253]

(8) Story of Ibrāhīm b. Adham and Khiḍr²¹

'Ibrāhīm the son of Adham was seated with slaves standing with folded arms before and behind him.

He had a jewel-studded crown upon his head and he wore a robe embroidered with silver.

Khiḍr entered his palace unannounced, in the guise of a camel-driver.

For fear of him the slaves caught their breath, all that saw him were affected.

Suddenly catching sight of him Ibrāhīm asked: "Who admitted thee, beggar?"

Khiḍr replied: "Is there no place for me here? This is an inn. I will put up here."

Said Ibrāhīm the son of Adham: "This is the castle of a great sultan.

Why, O fool, dost thou call it an inn? Art thou mad—though thou appearest a man of sense?"

Said Khiḍr: "O king, whose abode was this in the first place?"

Ibrāhīm answered: "First of all, as far as I know, so-and-so was king here,

And then after him so-and-so and then so-and-so, and now it is I that am king of the world."

Said Khiḍr: "Even if the king does not know it, this is an inn and nothing else,

For there is constant coming and going—how can one sit still in an inn?

[*Ro.* 202]

Many kings passed through before thee, good men and evil.

And men will come seeking thy life, and will bear thee off from this ancient inn.

Why rest in this ancient inn? Thou dost not belong here, why dost thou stay?"

Hearing these words Ibrāhīm was greatly affected; he was turned over and over like a ball.

[*Ri. 254*]

Khiḍr departed and Ibrāhīm ran after him—how could anyone escape from Khiḍr's snare?

He greatly conjured him, saying. "O generous man, accept me if thou canst.

Having secretly planted a seed in my heart, water it now, O life!"

So saying he followed in his wake and became one of the men of the world.

He renounced the ancient inn of this world; he rejected sovereignty for poverty.—

The pious who recognised the secret of poverty chose to be poor in the kingdom of poverty.

They escaped from the image of sovereignty, from what was in fact beggary.

For though the kingdom of this world is sovereignty, yet if thou look at it it is in its essence beggary.'

(9) Story of Maḥmūd and the beggar he met on the road²²

'Maḥmūd was riding with his troops when he was met on the road by a beggar.

The king greeted him in that desert place; the beggar simply returned the greeting²³ and passed by.

The goodly king said to his soldiers: "Behold the pride of that beggar!"

The beggar said: "If thou art wise, why call me beggar seeing thou art one thyself?

For I have been in a hundred and ten towns and more and in every mosque I have seen the signs of thy beggary.

Every house was assessed for a grain, nay for half a grain for such a beggar as thou.

I saw not a market, not a shop in which there was not an outcry against thy extortion.

Now, if thy sight be good, tell me which of us two is the beggar?"'

[*Ri.* 225]

(10) Story of Sanjar's visit to Rukn al-Dīn the son of Akkāf²⁴

'The pure-hearted Sanjar went in private to Rukn al-Dīn the son of Akkāf.

[*Ro.* 203]

The shaikh opened his mouth and said: "Art thou not ashamed, O king, of thy sovereignty?"

For a poor old woman cannot prepare herself a dish of fried onions without thy extorting some part of it in some way."

Said the king: "O shaikh, I do not see how I can extort my part of these fried onions."

The shaikh replied: "A poor feeble old woman spins with much toil and trouble a little thread.

She sells it for a little silver, O king, and then buys some fat, onions and firewood.

Onions, fat, wood and everything—thy agents know about it all.

Thou taxest the vegetables in the market—wood too, and fat. How should thou not know about it?

Thou chargest a pasturage tax on every goat. Better to be a beggar than such a king!

The king of the whole wide world gets his money as alms from an old woman's fried onions."

Sanjar's heart bled with confusion; he shed tears of blood and went out.—

On His road a beggar is like a king; the king of the world is a beggar squatting in the dust of the road.

To be a beggar on that road with empty hands is the same as to hold everything in thy hand.

A king with not less than a thousand treasures is as though his whole capital were a single dirhem.

[*Ri.* 256]

On this road gold and silver command no respect; only high endeavour is respected.

Such a man may be at a loss for a dirhem, but he has shaken his hand free of the world.'

(11) Story of the man who found a purse in the midst of wormwood²⁵

'A pure-hearted man had gone out in search of wormwood. When he was uprooting it from the ground

He came upon a purse of gold. Filled with grief he struck his hand hard against his head

And said to God: "Thou hast made me unhappy. What did I wish of Thee? Something to burn.

Why dost Thou give something from Thy Court that will at once burn me? I do not wish it.

I ask Thee for justice, not oppression. I need wormwood, not dirhems."²⁶—

If thou have high resolve like a true man change thyself into such a man by high resolve.

If thou look to the king for gold and silver, thy heart and soul will be in constant fear.

Why search for gold and silver, since in the end thou must give up thy soul?

[*Ro.* 204]

Say goodbye to gold and silver but keep thy soul, for thy soul is much better than a vast amount of silver.

Maḥmūd achieved his great fame because his soul bore the mark of poverty.

For had he reigned with arrogance the people would not always mention his name.

If a king can become famous for poverty, thou canst also become so famous.

For the kings that discovered the secret of poverty sought refuge in the shadow of an old woman.'

[*Ri.* 257]

(12) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the old woman²⁷

'One day the handsome²⁸ Maḥmūd had become separated from his following.

He was met on the road by an old woman with a staff like the letter *alif*²⁹ and a shape like the letter *dāl*:³⁰

With a sack slung across her back she was walking towards the mill.

The king said to her: "Thou hast neither strength nor speed, for there may be nerves left in thy sack, but there are none in thee.

Close thy sack lightly, then bring it and put it on the front of my horse,

so thou wilt be free of it."

When the old woman had placed her sack on the horse, it shot forward like the wind.

When it had left the old woman behind she opened her mouth and said:

"If, O king, thou do not keep by my side today, I shall not keep by thy side in all the anguish of tomorrow.

Thou urgest on thy dapple-grey so that one cannot catch up with thy dust.

However much thou drivest thy horse tomorrow thou wilt not catch up with my dust. What wilt thou do then?

Hurry not so today, O king, and we shall be together on the road tomorrow."

At the old woman's words the king shed tears of blood; he pulled in his reins and rode alongside her.—

If thou study well the lesson of loyalty, thou shalt be aided by divine guidance as was Maḥmūd.

Such is generosity, such is faith and such is loyalty; such is kindness, resignation and contentment.

If thou take the scent from this navel, thou shalt take away this ball from the nine polo-sticks of the heavens.

Otherwise thou shalt fall into repentance and shalt not rise again until the Judgment Day.

O beggar, learn charity, learn beggary, from such a sultan.'

[*Ri. 258*]

Discourse XVI

The son said: 'I have never seen a man who was free from the desire for sovereignty.

I know of no one, from the Moon to the Fish, who does not wish to be king.

[*Ro. 205*]

One cannot renounce the ideal of kingship: for kingship the body will renounce the soul.

That Jupiter-like¹ sage spoke well when he said: "Happy is he that is king be it only for a day!"'

Father's reply

The father said: 'The kingdom of this world which is founded on wind and will pass away—

Thou hast chosen it because thou hast not heard of the kingdom of the Hereafter.

Didst thou know of that kingdom, thou wouldst already now be king of both worlds.

The great ones who saw that kingdom to be the true kingdom—how would they have given a single grain for the kingdom of this world?

When they saw the eternal kingdom they cast away this kingdom here below.'²

(1) Story of the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd³

'Zubaida had a son by Hārūn who lived in seclusion in ignorance of the world.

His mother never let him out of the palace, cherishing him, like her own soul, behind the curtains.

When his incomparable intellect grew in strength, his heart boiled over in its yearning for wisdom.

He said to his mother: "Is this palace the world or are there other places outside?

If there are other places beside this, tell me so that I may go and visit them."

[Ri. 259]

His mother's heart was filled with compassion for him: she said "My dear and fortunate child,

I will send thee this very moment out of the palace; I will send thee into the fields and open spaces."

She prepared an Egyptian donkey for him and sent for a slave and two eunuchs.

They took the boy out, alone, so that he might take a look at the world.

Never having seen the world that peerless one was astonished at its ways.

By chance he caught sight of a coffin which a group of people were carrying along the road,

All weeping and lamenting, having devoured their livers in weeping.

The boy asked a eunuch: "Must all men die?"

The eunuch replied: "No body which has received a soul is safe from the clutches of death.

Death makes no distinction between base and noble: none can escape it."

[Ro. 206]

The boy said: "Since the like confronts me also, why should not my soul be in great fear for itself?"⁴

Since by death a stone will become like wax, one must quickly discover how this comes to pass.

The lion of death was lying in ambush; and this is what the boy was to see.

When he returned to his mother at night, all his joy and pleasure were at an end.

All night he lay awake for fear of death; his branches were broken and he trembled like a leaf.

At daybreak he fled from the town; for fear of wrath he bade farewell to comfort.

Unseen he wandered through the desert, treading in dust and blood.

Hārūn sought him all the time, but none could give him news of his son.

A man of pure heart related as follows: "Once I had some digging to be done.

[Ri. 260]

I left my house for the market and looked for a labourer.

I saw a lean and pale young man, from head to foot the personification of pain.

He had a pick and a basket in front of him; there was no spirit left in him, he was neither conscious nor unconscious.

I said to him: 'Canst thou dig?' 'Yes' he said, 'but my heart is not in it.'

I said; 'That suits me. Come.' That noble youth said: 'Hold.

I work only on Saturdays. Thou canst have me on that day only.'

Since he worked only on Saturdays he had received the name of Sabtī.⁵
In fine, I took him to my house and that one man did the work of two.

The next week I went to the market and searched long for him on every side.

They told me that he was a madman and that he was always to be found in such-and-such a ruined place.

I went and found him in those ruins, a creature apart from the rest of humanity,

In a state of distress and exhaustion, fallen into the snare of death and misery.

I said to him: 'Since thou art sick and wretched, I will take care of thee.

Come now, come to my house today, for I see no one to take pity on thee.'

He would not agree, but in the end, for my sake, he got up and acceded to my pleading.

When he entered my house he had become such that no one could be weaker.

A world of pain passed over him; the signs of death became visible upon him.

[*Ro.* 207]

He said to me: 'I have three wishes, friend: I must unburden myself to thee.'

[*Ri.* 261]

I said to him: 'Tell me thy wishes whatever they are, O sharer of divine secrets.'

He said to me: 'When my soul rises up from the bottom of the well of this prison,

Tie a rope around my neck, throw me face downwards on the ground and drag me to the market-place.

Say: "I act as a man of the faith: such is the punishment of those who rebel against the Almighty.

Whoever rebels against the Almighty, let him be thus degraded."

My second wish is this: I have a rug, old but clean, make it my winding-sheet and bury me in it.

For on this rug I performed many acts of devotion: perhaps in the earth I shall acquire some merit from it,

As for my third wish, take this Koran of mine which thou must know once belonged to 'Abdallāh the son of 'Abbās,⁶

And Hārūn used to carry it suspended from his shoulder concealed from other eyes.

Take this Koran to Hārūn in Baghdad and say to him: "He that gave

me this Koran

Sent his greetings and said: 'See that thou do not in heedlessness die a wretched death like mine,

For I died in heedless and vain conceit; I had no experience of life and I died like carrion.

Tell my mother never in any place to forget me in her prayers.'""

So saying he heaved a sigh and gave up the ghost. May God forgive him! How else can one die?

I said to myself: 'I must find a rope, and carry out his last wish.'

I put a rope around his neck and cruelly dragged him downwards through the dust.

Suddenly there came a Voice from the unseen, saying: 'O thou that hast lost thy way from utter ignorance,

[*Ri. 262*]

Art thou not ashamed of thy great ignorance? Is it thus that thou treatest one of Our friends?

Do not tie a rope round the neck of one whom the heavens themselves have caught in a noose.

What wilt thou of this man killed of grief upon the Way? Do not grieve him for We have forgiven him.'

When I heard that sublime voice, my hands became limp with fear.

I said to myself: 'Hold, O heedless one, this is no time for play with a rope. Desist!'

I went and called my friends and told them about that poor man.

They gathered together and with a pure heart wrapped him in his rug as a winding-sheet and confided him to the earth.

When I had finished with the young man, I took the Koran and set out on my way.

At dawn I took my stand at Hārūn's gate and waited until he showed himself.

[*Ro. 208*]

I offered him the Koran. He took it from me gladly and asked who had given it to me.

I told him that it was a young labourer, thin, pale and emaciated.

Strange to say, when I uttered the word 'labourer', floods of tears flowed from his eyes.

He wept so much that he fainted away. When he had recovered a little from his emotion,

He said to me: 'Where is that graceful cypress?' I answered, 'Long live the Sultan. He is no more.'

On hearing this he gave a great cry and then, wise and sensible as he was, he swooned away.

He wept and cried out more than anyone can remember.

The sound of his sighs reached the heavens and caused his troops on every side to come to a halt.

Then he said: 'At the time of his death what did he say about me and what did he tell thee?'

I answered: 'He said to me then: "Thou must say to the Commander of the Faithful:

'Beware lest thou be deluded by thy royalty. Listen to the words of a poor labourer.

[*Ri.* 263]

Strive to accept my advice and not to die in this carrion-filled kingdom.

For if thou die like carrion, O peerless one, thou shalt remain like carrion for ever.

How long wilt thou be plagued with the world? Rather follow the Faith that thou mayst be content.

For the world is a curtain before thy soul, but the Faith is the candle of thy belief.

If thou seize the kingdom of the whole world it will settle on top of thee when thou art dead.

Thou art a delicate man reared in luxury; accustom thyself to carrying the loads of others.

Now I have spoken and I depart. See that thou do not at such a time ignore such advice.' " " " "

Again Hārūn's pains were renewed; in his bewildered state his condition changed from moment to moment.

Finally he took the man into his palace and had him sit before a curtain.

Zubaida appeared behind that curtain so that the tale might be told to her.

The man related as follows: "When I came to the point where I threw him on the ground and dragged him along,

There arose a cry behind the curtain; the women were in tumult like the sea.

Zubaida said: 'Curses upon thee! May God punish thee for the wrong thou hast done me!

Wert thou not afraid to throw my own dear son on his face, and he in so distressful a state?

Didst thou not recognise a Caliph's son that thou didst fling a rope about his neck?

Alas my wandering child that died so young! Alas O light of my life and candle of my soul!

[*Ro.* 209]

Thou hast rushed off like the wind and made thy mother's soul into a fiery furnace.

Alas for my sweet tender child, who art buried like treasure in the ground!’

What more shall I say? She asked to be shown the grave and erected a beautiful mausoleum over it.

[*Ri. 264*]

She gave the messenger much gold, but Hārūn gave him even more.

He became a very rich man. My tale is done. If thou have another, tell it us.” —

What wilt thou with a kingdom, which in the end will inevitably bring ruin upon thy soul?

If thou stand on the square of world-empire, on that very square thou shall be checkmated.

Why take up thy abode in a hovel which thou will be forced to quit?

Why yearn for a sweetheart to be brought low in the end by constant grieving over her?

Why gather together at great cost something of which thou shalt not enjoy a single grain?

If thou art a foe to sovereignty be the son; if thou art a sovereign like Hārūn, be the father.

I have told thee a little about the son, now I will speak to thee for a while about the father.’

(2) Story of Hārūn and Buhlūl’

‘One day Hārūn was passing along the road when he was met by Buhlūl the madman.

Said Buhlūl: “Hail, friend Hārūn!” Hārūn was at once greatly incensed.

He said to his following: “Who is this wretch who calls me in such fashion by my name?”

They answered: “It is Buhlūl, O king.” Hārūn went up to him.

He said to him: “Hast thou no respect for me that thou so frivolously callest me by my name?

Dost thou not know me, madman? Shall I spill thy blood on the ground forthwith?”

That subtle man replied: “I know thee well. This is who thou art:

If in the East there is one old woman left who stubs her foot against a stone,

[*Ri. 265*]

Or if somewhere a bridge is broken and a goat hurts its foot,

Though thou art in the East, it will be charged against thee.

Fear, O heedless one, lest thou be brought to reckoning.”

Hārūn wept long and bitterly. Then he said: “If thou have debts,

[Ro. 210]

Tell me that I may pay them all forthwith." The virtuous Buhlūl replied:

"Wilt thou pay debts with debts? For thou hast not a single grain of thy own.

Thy wealth is the people's wealth; none of the money in thy treasury is thy own.

Go, give back the Muslims' property. Who told thee to take from this one and give to that?"

Hārūn asked Buhlūl to give him a piece of advice, and Buhlūl the mad-man answered:

"O thou whose feet are firmly planted in the world, the signs of the people of hell are plainly visible on thee.

Remove those signs from thy face, otherwise I have spoken and depart. Thou knowest what will befall."

Hārūn went on: "If I am destined for hell, what then of all my acts of faith?"

Said Buhlūl: "If thou consider well, thou behavest every month and every year like the people of hell."

Hārūn continued: "Even though I am an idle talker, yet my kindred with the Prophet⁸ will be of some account."

Said Buhlūl: "When listening to the Koran, didst thou not mark the words: 'The ties of kindred between them shall cease'?"⁹

Hārūn went on: "Come now, O needy one, I do not despair of intercession."

[Ri. 266]

Said Buhlūl: "Without divine permission there is no intercession.¹⁰ What wouldst thou then of me?"

Hārūn said to his following: "Ride on. This man has killed me and you know nothing of it."—

Since neither king nor kingdom is here [for ever], thou shalt be saved only if thou perish.

A stone will remain in place for thousands of years, but thou wilt not remain.

Why linger in a place where a stone will remain longer than thou?

O heart, take no heed of the inverted sphere—what wouldst thou of that sea of blood?

It has a pleasant taste, this pot of rich and savoury meat, but its golden lid is fashioned of death.

Thou must rise above the sphere and put the lid upon this blood-filled pot.

Since this bubbling pot is filled with blood, do not put thy finger in it but fasten down the lid.

The dawn is the blood and the revolving sphere writhes, as though beheaded, in that blood.

Behold the vast multitudes of peoples jostling against each other, all born in order to go under the ground.

The whole earth is so much black blood; a multitude of innocent victims like Siyāvush.¹¹

[Ro. 211]

Thou wilt plainly see, if thou art discerning, in every single drop of blood a hundred Siyāvushes.'

(3) Story of Solomon and his search for a pitcher¹²

'One day Solomon asked for a pitcher from which he might drink water without suffering anguish,

A pitcher that was not made of the dust of the dead that had fallen by the way.

They searched long for such clay and yet, strange to say, none of the seekers could find it.

[Ri. 257]

Then a *div* appeared and said: "I will bring this clay that is unmixed with the dust of the dead."

He plunged headlong into the sea and at once descended a thousand ells.

From the bottom of the sea he brought up some mud, kneaded it into clay and made a pitcher.

But when Solomon had filled the pitcher with water, it told him of its identity,

Saying: "I am so-and-so, the son of so-and-so, but drink thy water and do not ask for a sign,

For from hence to the backs of the Ox and the Fish there are as many human bodies as thou canst wish for.

If thou seek clay that is not the dust of this or that person, it does not exist upon this earth.

If thou have a pitcher or a kiln be sure that it is of the dust of the grave."—

Happy the clay which, though it be subjected to fire, becomes a pitcher for water!

Unhappy the clay out of which a kiln is fashioned, for every moment it is subjected to fierce heat!

Look at the cemetery to see pain; thou wilt see a whole world of women and men

Caught in the dust and blood; they have no way to the inside and are cut off from the outside.

If thou have vision from a pure soul, see what dust the dust of the cemetery is.

For if thou examine every speck of dust thou wilt find in it, as it were, a hundred worlds of regret.

The cemetery is but the first stage on the journey: consider how difficult must be the last.

If thou wouldst know the purity of the Hereafter, frequent the cemetery as much as thou canst,

For thy heart will be revived by seeing the dead; it will be as though thou hadst already arrived in the other world.'

[*Ri.* 268]

(4) Story of the king who was angry with a dervish¹³

'A king was angry with a dervish and drove him with anguish-filled heart from his presence,

[*Ro.* 212]

Saying, "I do not permit thee to remain a single instant in my kingdom."

The dervish left his presence and went to the cemetery, where he made himself at home.

When the king heard of this he sent a message to say: "Did I not command thee, O crazy one,

To quit my kingdom? Wouldst thou oppose me? Wouldst thou shed thy own blood?"

The dervish answered: "I undertook to leave thy kingdom.

And is not the cemetery the first stage on the road to the Resurrection?

Is it not the first stage on the way to the Last Judgment? It is not in thy kingdom; it is in the kingdom of the Hereafter."—

When a woman begins to feel the birth-pains, it is said of her condition

That she is between the two worlds with one foot in each.

Thou also, O foolish man, as long as thou art in this world, art always suspended between two breaths.

If thou take one breath and the next do not follow, all trace of thee will vanish from the world.

Do not cry out or lament, be calm, for the bird that has escaped will not re-enter the snare.

Since the body is a snare for the bird of the soul,¹⁴ why should it make its abode in this snare?

(5) Story of the young man who married a beautiful wife who died¹⁵

'A young man was given in marriage a wife like the moon, such that no man's mind was capable of describing her.

[*Ri.* 269]

Her beauty was the miracle of the lovesick; her lips an elixir to the thirsty.

It so chanced that the moon-like bride died; she had no illness but died in childbirth.

When her husband laid her to rest and concealed with clay that sun-like face,

He had with him a bottle of rose-water with which he had one day washed her feet.

With that bottle he watered the top of her grave but the rose-water was mixed with tears of blood.

Why did he become so attached to that delighter of hearts when he was bound to wash his hands of her in the end?

Why did he wash the feet of his bride when he was destined to wash his hands of his bride herself?

What shall I say of thee and me? Alas! And for all this coming and going alas!

[Ro. 213]

Discourse XVII

The son said: 'Thou knowest that sovereignty is dear to the good and the wicked alike.

The great and the wise, for all their power, always look to kings for their livelihood.

I have seen no one, carefree or careworn, who could dispense with attendance upon them.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'My dear son, how long must thou talk in this strain? How long, in thy ignorance, must thou seek for transitory sovereignty? Since thy sovereignty endures but for a while, do not load a whole world on thy shoulders.

Since thou canst not alone bear the burden of thyself, why hasten to take upon thee the burden of all creation?

It is hard enough to die as a poor man, how then shalt thou die as a king?

Since thou must see that kingship comes to an end I am puzzled as to what it is thou art seeking.'

[Ri. 270]

(1) Story of the sheep and the butcher¹

'The prince of the suffering has said as follows: "It is no matter for surprise that sheep

Are harshly dragged away to have their heads cruelly severed,

For they are brute beasts and do not know and so they go to their doom.

But one must be surprised at the butcher, for he is endued with understanding and knowledge and the urge to acquire knowledge.

Since he knows that his head too will be struck off on this road,

How can he sit secure and carefree, motionless in comfortable repose?"—

The child which the world carries in its womb owes its being to nothingness.

In generation after generation back to Adam consider how many children the world has killed in its womb?

How many princes have been humbled like ants! How many lions have fallen into the grave!

The world has not a particle of intelligence in its brain; it is nought but a Suhrāb-slaying Rustam.

What do I say? I speak foolishly like a drunken man. It is an old woman full of tricks from head to foot.

[Ro. 214]

It fattens thee in order to eat thee; lay thy neck, whether thou wilt or not, before that blade.

Do not stretch thy neck. The heavens are waiting to strike thee, and if thou be struck it will be on thy neck.

Thou art being fattened to be thus struck; to become fat and be eaten.'

(2) Story of the falcon and the domestic fowl²

'A falcon was annoyed with a fowl and said to it:

"Man sees to thy lodging and does not suffer thee to go for an instant without water or corn.

He protects thee constantly from thy foes, so that no enemy may lay his hands on thee.

[Ri. 271]

And yet thou constantly fleest from man. Why art thou so disloyal?

Man is always loyal to thee and yet thou showest nothing but disloyalty towards him.

Thou never mixest with men—I have never encountered anyone so unfriendly as thou.

As for me, if man sends me out a hundred times upon a hundred errands,

I fly dutifully off and likewise quickly return.

The domestic fowl has no loyalty; it behaves like a stranger."

When the fowl heard these words it opened its mouth and said: "O foolish falcon:

If thou alight a hundred times in the market place, thou wilt not see a slaughtered falcon hanging head downwards

But thou wilt see a hundred fowls with severed heads hanging by their feet with their breasts rent open.

If this be man's loyalty it disgusts me—of that be sure.

If such be the faith and loyalty of the world better to heap dust on thy head eternally.

For if man fattens me now, he does it in order to kill me.

If thou consider that loyalty then perfidy is better. Hatred is better by far than such affection and loyalty.”—

For a long time, O revolving sphere, thy mill has been grinding the blood of mankind.

It is strange, O wicked sphere, how thou dost cast in the dust those whom thou hast tenderly reared.

O world, what aim hast thou in fattening us but to drink our blood?

None knows of thy blood-drinking, for thou drinkest in secret, beneath the earth and at the bottom of wells.

O world, since thy life is death, to look to thee for loyalty leads only to perdition.

[*Ri.* 272]

[*Ro.* 215]

First thy perfidy has thrown me into a state of anguish, and then thy loyalty has thrown me into the grave.

I do not know why this doorless and roofless thing turns on itself from morn till night.

The marvellous tale of these seven compasses has caused me to welter a hundred times in my blood.

Every moment I am lost from head to foot; I know neither head nor foot of the world.

Like a ball I am headless and footless because I can no longer tell head from foot nor foot from head.

Since here below the soul takes breath in ignorance of itself, how is it possible to boast of possessing knowledge?’

(3) Story of the seer who could tell the condition of the dead³

‘There was a famous seer to whom the spirits [of the dead] were revealed.

If he stopped for a moment at the head of a grave he would see all that happened inside it.

A certain pious man put him to the test; he took him to the tomb of ‘Umar-i Khaiyām,

And said to him: “What dost thou see in this dust? Inform me, O holy seer.”

That worshipful man replied: “This is a man in a state of imperfection

At that Threshold towards which he turned his face he laid claim to knowledge.

Now that his ignorance has been revealed to him, he perspires because of the confusion of his soul.

He is left between shame and confusion; his very studies have made him deficient.”—

Since the seven heavens have knocked in vain at that door, how can one boast there of knowledge?

Since neither beginning nor end is visible, none can find the head or foot of the world.

The heavens are a ball; though thou run after them for a whole life-time thou shalt find neither head nor foot to them.

Who knows in what manner I have walked in this hateful valley from end to end?

[*Ri. 283*]

I have traversed the whole world a hundred times; I have found no cure and am utterly helpless.

The whole world is nought but pain and grief; for if thou have time that too is a sword.

To me the celestial sphere is like an hour-box; playing with it leaves no time for devotion.'

(4) Story of the distraught one's reply about the world

'Some asked a man of tormented soul: "What dost thou think of the state of the world?"'

[*Ro. 216*]

He answered: "This world is full of grief and pain; it seems to me exactly like a chessboard.

Now mankind stands peacefully drawn up in ranks; now they are flung together like two opposing armies.

One man is lifted out of his square and another set down in his place.

Sometimes the king is beset from every side and evicted with a hundred indignities from his square.

And so men go on until they learn to shake [the pieces off] this futile board."—

A life of sport and play will divert thee from the Way; the life of the Hereafter will cast a light upon thee,

Whereby thy heart will be freed for ever from the frivolities of this world.

Thou hast been deluded by a life of sport and play;⁵ thou art concerned with wealth and sovereignty and power.

Thou art a royal falcon. Spread thy wings and fly up out of the snare of these childish playthings.'

(5) Story of the question put to a madman about God⁶

'Someone asked a madman: "What does God do, O fool?"

He answered: "If thou hast seen children's slates, know that the world is just like one of these.

Now He writes something new upon it and now He rubs it out again.

So God is ever employed. He does nothing but abrogate and confirm."⁷—

Alas for mankind, and alack for the world and fie upon the drawings on this children's slate!

[*Ri.* 274]

The designs which women paint on their hands, though they are pretty at the time,

It were better if the heart were not attached to them for they last only a few days.

Designs which do not last are becoming neither to hand nor to foot.

A design which is produced with sal-ammoniac is poison for thy soul and thy heart will be disgusted with it.

The delights of this world are without number, but they are no more permanent than those designs.

Mohammed was the first of the men of this world: see where he stood on the road of this life.

He held his head high in the kingdom of poverty; he flung about him the cloak of indigence.

He decked a hundred tables with the food of hunger; he spread his carpet on the kingdom of want.

He cast dust upon the kingdom of this world and so rose up from earth into the heavens.

He attained such perfection in the kingdom of poverty as I cannot think that anyone can attain.'

[*Ro.* 217]

(6) Story of Fāṭima's dowry⁸

'Usāma⁹ relates as follows: "The Prophet gave the order: 'Summon Abū Bakr and 'Umar before me.'

When they had come he said: 'Call Zahrā¹⁰ also.'

Then he said to her: 'I wish thee to bring me all that thou hast for thy dowry at once.

Although thou art the light of my eyes, O illuminator of hearts, yet today I will give thee to Ḥaidar.'¹¹

That peerless one went off and at once brought out of the house a hand-mill,

An old palm-leaf mat, a toothbrush and a well-cleaned pair of slippers.

[*Ri.* 275]

She brought also a wooden bowl, a cushion of stout sheepskin

And a *chādur*¹² with seven tears. She laid it all down and stood looking at it.

The prophet, Lord of genera and species, slung the mill around his neck.

Abū Bakr picked up the mat, 'Umar the cushion; and off they set.

Then Fāṭima, the light of the Prophet's eye, went and flung the old *chādur* about her,

Then laced up the slippers and took the toothbrush in her hand."

Usāma went on: "Then I picked up the bowl and followed.

When I arrived before Ḥaidar's room, I could not see people's faces because of my tears.

The Prophet said: 'O virtuous man, why art thou weeping so bitterly?'

I answered: 'Because of Zahrā's poverty my soul and liver have turned to blood and stone.

He that is lord of the two worlds—behold! such is his daughter's dowry.

See what Caesar and Chosroes possess and what the Prophet owns of the goods of this world!'

He said to me: 'O Usāma, since we must all die even this little is a great deal.

Since neither foot nor hand nor face nor body nor soul will remain resign thyself to losing these things also.' "—

Such was the wedding of the prophet's beloved daughter—what then dost thou expect?

Thou hast heard how the Prophet lived—dost thou still wish to amass the goods of this world?

Since the world does nothing but drink thy blood, why gather together what will only be a load about thy neck?

[*Ro.* 218]

Though thou wert as perfect as the sun, yet in the end thy kingdom would decline.

[*Ri.* 276]

Though the world-illuminating sun ascends the throne of empire every day,

Yet by the hand of the heavens, with a face like the moon's, he lays his cup every night upon the ground.

Were it not for this azure curtain, none would know either crookedness or blueness.

The heavens are crooked from beginning to end; thou wilt find no straightness in any part of them.

Since the world has taken its crookedness from it, thou wilt never find

straightness in it either.

The heavens turn their winch upon the blood of mankind, because of their Bucket¹³ men's throats are in a noose.

The earth stands firm upon the Ox, but the heavens are never at rest.

I do not understand how it is that the heavens race along while the Ox stands still.

The heavens seek thy life because the Ox's feet stand in between.

The earth on the Ox's back is thy foe because its ox is ever on thy threshing-floor.

Why sleep between so many oxen? Place the yoke upon them and depart.

A pit; an ox in it; a ball on the ox; the heavens as a polo-stick—who can play this game for a single instant?

Behold the heavens like the faith of Zoroaster standing one behind the other thirsting after thy blood.¹⁴

But look with the eye of the heart, O distraught one, who fillest thy belly by their favour.

There is no road to the celestial sphere; how long wilt thou turn around thyself like a piece of rope?

Though thou show friendship all thy life to the heavens, yet they stitch or unstitch like a tailor.

An oven has been heated by this globe of fire, but thou shalt never enjoy a loaf at its table.

How should the moon convert a stone into a ruby seeing that every month it turns itself into a horseshoe?

[*Ri.* 277]

Who knows what game will be played at any instant by this revolving compass?

Measure out the lives of this handful of wretches, O heaven, measure them out!

Art thou not giddy from all this measuring out of ages?

Wicked wretch, thou hast wrought evilly when thou in idle play hast overturned the world.

Upon thy head thou carriest a pot of blood covered by a lid; thou art constantly killing and yet remainest silent.

Why dost thou always work such spells? Canst thou do nought but kill?

The aged Firmament, like a six-day old child, has cast thee suddenly down from the heights into the depths.

[*Ro.* 219]

Thou art, old man of sixty, in evil case, for this six-day old child has made a fool of thee.

Like a six-year old child thou art not aware that this six-year old child hast led thee astray.

For though thou art now a feeble old man, yet in the grave thou shalt be a child of the world to come.

Why pride thyself on thy lion-like strength? For though thou be proud thou hast lost thy way.

Thou art like a child, without stature or strength, the shroud is thy swaddling-band and the grave thy cradle.

Thy hair, O peerless one, has turned to cotton; for the world would turn thee into cotton.

Youth¹⁵ is like fire, O feeble old man, and thou art cotton; and the two will never agree.'

(7) Story of the old man who married a young girl¹⁶

'A certain old man married a young wife, but there was no harmony between them.

The old man would call her to him for a kiss, but they mingled with each other no more than do wine and milk.

[*Ri.* 278]

The old man had a friend, who said to him: "O careworn one,

Tell me how things are between thee and thy wife. Thou art old and she is young—this is wrong."

He answered: "I am altogether lost on her account. Whenever I ask her for a kiss,

She says to me: 'I do not like thy hair. Cotton belongs in the mouths of the dead.

Why art thou always kissing me and putting hairs like cotton in my mouth?'"—

Be off with thee and remove the cotton from thy ears: it becomes thee better in thy hair.

If thou remove the cotton from thy ears thou wilt see that thy hair is like cotton.

Thy back is bent with age like a bow because thy head is heavy like an arrowhead with sin.

Ask God to awake thee before thy doom; thou art drunk with negligence; ask for sobriety:

Fling away all that thou hast, like a man; why concern thyself, like a woman, with a revolving wheel?

If thou have clay on thy head why wash it? Tell me, will not thy head fall apart into clay?

Lift the veil from the ruins of thy body; lift the lid off the dish like a man.

So may this wilderness of unbelief and imperfection be made to bloom with the True Faith. Such will be thy fortune.

[Ro. 220]

Woe upon thee if thou die in unbelief, for men will shed tears of blood upon every part of thee!

If one tread the path of the Faith all one's life, how can one then, in the end, die an unbeliever?

(8) Story of the dervish and Abū Bakr Warrāq¹⁷

'One night a devotee dreamt that Abū Bakr Warrāq was weeping bitterly.

He said to him: "O man of God, why art thou weeping so violently?"

[Ri. 279]

He answered: "Why should I not weep? Why should I not be overwhelmed and bewildered?

For in the place where I am now sitting alone in the cemetery,

Of ten dead men that were brought thither today not one was a believer. That is reason enough for my sorrow.

When a man has lived for seventy years with the True Faith, how can one look on when he is being delivered up to unbelievers?

That is why I am weeping and sorrowing today. What shall I say? Such is my cash-in-hand today."—

The task, my dear son, seems difficult, but then mankind also seems heedless.

Whoever knows the fear of the latter end suffers fresh anguish every moment.

Walking in fear between Unbelief and Belief he calls himself neither Unbeliever nor Moslem.

He sits uneasily between Unbelief and Belief awaiting the final outcome.'

(9) Story of the saint who wished to be buried between two cemeteries¹⁸

'When that shaikh was some sixty or seventy years old, he lay in his death agony.

Someone said to him: "O thou who art about to step into the next world, tell me where I shall bury thee."

He answered: "My faith is weak; I do not wish to be buried amongst Muslims.

Since I have not the light of the Muslims, what should I be doing in the cemetery of the Faithful?

But neither do I wish to be buried amongst the Jews, for they offended the Prophet.

Find me a piece of land between the two cemeteries, for I belong to neither.

I have not walked in the road of Islam but neither have I trodden the path of Jewry.”—

[Ro. 221]

[Ri. 280]

Such a one must take his place between the two and see what will come of him hereafter.

Thou hast not taken a single step along this road—where wert thou all this time?

Thou hast no task [here], thy task is *there*. *There* there are many defiles along the road.

There are more defiles in front of thee *there* than thou canst ever hope to pass.

This valley is exceedingly hard to cross. I fear it, I have great fear of it.

Thy life is in danger in it and if thy soul bleed with anguish there is good cause.

What a sea there is in thy soul, of which neither beginning nor end is visible!

Thousands of souls have bled upon this road, but not one of them is aware of it.

Who knows what fancies every lamp-like heart concocts in every brain?

Our sorrow increases every moment because of the road that lies before us.

The lamp of the light of the Faith is set upon the road; what wouldst thou do if it were suddenly extinguished?

(10) Story of Sufyān Thaurī¹⁹

‘When Sufyān Thaurī was still a young man, his figure was as curved as a bow.

Someone said to him: “O imam of the world to come, why is thy back bent double already in thy youth?

By thy appearance the time is not yet come for a bent back; it is not right to see thee with such a back.

What happened to thee? Tell me; give me some hint or explanation; inform me.”

He answered: “I had a master who always followed and showed the Way.

When he was at death's door I went to his bedside and found him in a pitiful state,

His spirit in extreme agitation, his blood boiling like a sea;

[*Ri. 281*]

His heart and soul filled with the fire of jealousy, hundreds of teardrops on every eyelash.

Though wrapped in clothes he was trembling like a leaf, his heart filled with despair on the threshold of death.

I said to him: 'What ails thee?' He answered: 'My faith is wasting away.

For fifty years I have walked in blood and now I have been struck by the sword of death.

There has come a Voice saying: "Thou art rejected by Us, depart from this door; thou art not worthy of Us." '

[*Ro. 222*]

When I heard these words of his, I struck myself, and hence the curvature of my spine.

Since he spoke thus at such a time, my back became thus, for thus only could it be.

Since such was the master's lot how could the disciple find hope in his faith?

Such being my master's end I washed my hands of my discipleship."—

A lamp exposed to the wind—I do not see how can it be safe.

A lamp blown out by the wind—it is as though it had never existed.

When the lamp of thy soul is suddenly extinguished thou shalt not, whilst thou art still thou, find thy way to it [again].

However much thou seek an extinguished lamp, thou shalt find it nowhere. Why then all this searching?

Do not mourn over the extinguished lamp; that would be a pity, do not fill thy heart with grief.

Happy the dog that died and escaped from grief, but unhappy this child of Adam!

None would suffer grief from dying were it not for the Resurrection hereafter.

Live once again through knowledge; be dead to this carrion world.

Seek knowledge of the valley of the silent and when thou knowest learn by their example.

[*Ri. 282*]

A Jew who applied himself to the task was admitted to the table of Mohammed.

If thou speedily apply thyself, thou art not in this respect inferior to a Jew.'

(11) Story of the Jew who became a Muslim and what befell him²⁰

‘There was a venerable old man in Syria who at the set time used to read the Torah.

When he came to the name of the Prophet he would erase it or cut it out.

When he opened the holy book the next day, he would find the Prophet’s name still written there.

Again he would erase it and the next day he would find it written there again.

One day he was seized with anguish and said to himself: “I cannot hide the sun with mud.

Perhaps this guide who has arisen is the true one; I must go to Medina straightway.”

[Ro. 223]

His heart tossed like a sea with longing, but like a mountain he concealed that jewel within him.

He procured a camel and set out making straight for Medina.

He arrived at noon-time; he did not know which way to turn.

When he came to the Mosque of the Prophet, Anas²¹ chanced to come along. He said to him: “O man of pure essence, lead me to the Prophet.”

Weeping, Anas took him into the mosque, where he found the people seated in a state of bewilderment.

Şiddiq²² stood, with bowed head, in the *miḥrāb*, with the learned seated around him.

That venerable man thought that Şiddiq was the Prophet because he stood in front.

He said to him: “O apostle of the Court of God, this lost old man brings thee greetings.”

When they heard the Prophet’s name, they all quivered like a bird whose throat has just been cut.

Tears flowed from their eyes like rain. What a flood arose from those friends of the Prophet!

A cry rose up from the crowd; it was as though a hundred candles flared up in every heart.

[Ri. 283]

That stranger stood still as though his feet were shackled, his heart broken by that sorrow.

He said to them: “I am a stranger, a Jew, and have no share of the Law.

Perhaps I said something that I should not have said, something that I should have kept to myself.

Otherwise why are you weeping so bitterly? I do not know of any such rite.”

'Umar replied: "We are not weeping on that account; we have no fault to find with thee.

But it is only a week, distressful man, since the Prophet departed from this world.

When we heard his name from thy lips, our souls, like thine, were sore with grief.

Now we burn in fire for longing for him, now we freeze in cold because of our separation from him.

Alas for that world-illuminating sun! Without him we are today but a single ray.

Alas for that great ocean! Without him we are less than a single drop of water."

When that old man learnt the truth, from sorrow he rent his garments.

He rained more rain from his eyes than a cloud in the springtime.

From the wailing and lamentation that day he was overwhelmed again with heartrending mourning.

But when anguish had abated and reason returned and the heart had lost strength,

[Ro. 224]

The Jew said: "Do something for me; bring me one of the Prophet's garments,

So that if it was not granted me to see his face, I may at least smell his scent."

Said 'Umar: "We can ask for such a garment, but we must ask for Zahrā's help."

Said 'Alī: "But who can approach her? For she has closed her door to everybody.

All this week her head has been bowed, for her grief is greater than that of all the rest.

[Ri. 284]

Because of her mourning she will not utter a word; she does not cease for a moment from lamentation."

Finally, in their sorrow and affliction the Companions went to the Lady of Paradise.

Someone knocked the door and there came her voice saying: "Day has left me and night has come over me.

Who is knocking at the door of an orphan such as I, shut up behind a tattered curtain?

Who is knocking at the door of a prisoner such as I, seated upon an old mat?

Who is knocking at the door of a mourner such as I, with death lying in ambush for my life?"

They told her what had happened. She said: "The Prophet spoke truly

When, as he delivered up his soul to God, he whispered to me about this event,

Saying 'One that loves me will come as a traveller but that well-wisher will not see my face.

Give him this ragged garment for it is all he wants. Greet him kindly from me.' "

They gave him the patched garment and he put it on, and when the scent reached him he became agitated.

That scent led him to the truth. He became a Muslim and asked to see Muḥammad's grave.

They took him thither; his heart rose up while that pure one sat down

But from the intoxicating scent of his grave he collapsed and his pure soul rose to heaven.

That sorrowing old man delivered up his soul, face downwards upon the Prophet's grave.—

If thou love, this is the way; extinguish thyself like a candle out of longing for the loved one.'

[*Ri. 285*]

Discourse XVIII

The son said: 'Since that signet is a precious thing, tell me at least what the secret of it is.

If I cannot now attain to that signet, I can at least be delighted with the knowledge of its nature.'

[*Ro. 225*]

Father's reply

The father unsealed the ruby jewel-case and scattering pearls related the following tale:

(1) Story of Buluqyā and 'Affān¹

'Buluqyā, accompanied by 'Affān, went in search of the signet of Solomon's kingdom.

In the midst of the seven seas there was a cave, towards which it was difficult to find a way of access.

A peri appeared in the guise of a serpent and said to 'Affān:

"If thou gather the juice from the leaves of a certain branch in such-and-such a place and rub it on thy feet,

Thou wilt walk upon the surface of the sea as a fleet-footed man upon the desert."

The two companions reached that place and rubbed the juice on their feet.

They sped across the water like an arrow released by a powerful thumb.

Finally, when those two devoted ones had attained their goal in the midst of the seven seas,

There appeared a lofty cave, for dread of which the mountain-peak itself bowed its head.

Although the travellers were friends yet they were not "friends of the Cave".²

In front of the cave was set a couch on which a fortunate youth lay sleeping.

[*Ri. 286*]

On his finger was a ring whereof the price was greater than any purchaser could pay.

At the foot of the couch a dragon was sleeping coiled up, so that neither its head nor its feet were visible.

Hearing those men it woke up, lashing its tail and belching fire.

'Affān was seized with such terror that he was attacked with unendurable pain.

He said to his friend: "Do not go forward; do not imperil thy life, reflect.

Do not sacrifice thy life for the seal of Solomon; what wilt thou do, O Muslim, with his kingdom, when thou art dead?"

He did not obey him but went up to the couch of the sultan of the world.

When he reached out for the ring, the dragon became as black as charcoal.

'Affān leapt back in fright and reflecting saw the meaning of that mystery.

[Ro. 226]

There came a vision from the Court of God, "If thou wouldst have the kingdom of Solomon,

Practise contentment for that is an eternal kingdom that overshadows even the disc of the sun.

It was by contentment that Solomon held so great a kingdom.'

(2) Story of Solomon and his carpet³

'One day Solomon was journeying with his army, being carried [through the air] upon a carpet.

Suddenly he fell to thinking about his kingdom and wondered whether there was in the whole world another such king as he.

A corner of that lofty palace sagged and at once Solomon shouted at the wind:

"Why hast thou done this to my carpet? Whom dost thou wish to hurl to the ground?"

Said the wind: "I am not to blame, O Solomon; thou shouldst guard thy heart against such wicked thoughts.

I have a command from the Court of God that so long as Solomon guards his heart,

[Ri. 287]

I must support his carpet, but otherwise I am not to obey his orders.

When for a moment thou didst think of kingly power, one corner of thy carpet subsided."—

Thou must always practise contentment so that thy kingdom may not be lost to thee.

For the essence of sovereignty and the realm of power is nothing else than contentment,

But the essence of contentment is poverty; thou art king if thou pride thyself on thy poverty.

If thou wish for world-sovereignty, eschew pride and practise contentment for a while.

That ring Solomon had was contentment; it was through contentment that he ruled the world as he did.

So great a kingdom did he possess because he was content with basket-weaving.⁴

The sun is a mighty sultan because from horizon to horizon it is content with one round disc.⁵

The moon is honoured as a sovereign because it is content with a round loaf once a month.

When thou hast lost thy feet, what dost thou want with a path? When thou hast the king, what dost thou want with a kingdom?

(3) Story of the Caliph Ma'mūn⁶ and the slave⁷

'The Caliph Ma'mūn had a slave, from whom no kind of charm or grace was absent.

[*Ro.* 227]

In the fairness of his beauty he was like the sun; the whole of mankind yearned for his company.

The locks of his hair formed a musky snare in which he held all Hindustan in folds like China.⁸

Aye, were his locks not in China they would not have scattered the perfume of the musk-deer.

What shall I say of his bow-like eyebrows? For his heart-ravishing locks resembled a raven.

From love of the hole pierced in his ruby mouth by his pearl-like teeth thousands of holes were pierced in hearts upon every side.

[*Ri.* 288]

There was no questioning of the beauty of that hole: so small was it that there was not even room for breathing.

Ma'mūn had long wished for that slave to come out of his shell

So that he might know how he felt towards him;

Whether he loved him or not, whether or not he kept faith with him;

Whether, as the beloved, he was true to love and whether he deserved to be an object of love.

It so happened that one day a group of people, their hearts filled with pain and anguish, came from Basra to Baghdad,

Saying, "Let the Commander of the Faithful give us justice, for we have a complaint against the emir of Basra.

He has inflicted and we have suffered such oppression as we have experienced from no other, nor even heard tell of.

If thou do not punish him, thou wilt be disturbed with [the memory of] our complaint."

Ma'mūn said in secret to those people: "Ask for this slave of mine now at once.

Perhaps he will accept the post of emir and come to your aid hereafter."

So they asked the king, saying: "If this slave will be our king,

We shall all be pleased with his rule and shall be free from the tyranny of that emir."

Ma'mūn then looked at that slave to see whether he would be loyal to his love.

He said to the silver-breasted slave: "What dost thou think about this post?

If thou wilt ride towards that place I will write a letter appointing thee governor."

The slave remained silent, his heart seething with desire for Basra.

Then Ma'mūn realised that that moon-like one had no love at all for the king.

His heart turned away from that ravisher of hearts; he was concerned no more with the well-being of that beauteous one.

[*Ri.* 289]

He repented of his love for him and was disturbed with the outcome of it.

He said to himself: "My love was a mistake. How was I to know that he was unworthy of my love?"

[*Ro.* 228]

Retiring to a private place he wrote in his own hand a letter to the governor,

Saying, "When my slave comes thither he will bring a letter referring to him.

Thou must straightway decorate the streets and market-places throughout Basra.

Then bring rosewater mixed with poison; pour it over him and so destroy him.

Then set up heralds on every side to proclaim, as they ride along:

'Whoever prefers kingly power to the king shall be punished a hundred thousand times more severely than this.'"—

Since God created thee for Himself and brought thee into existence to be near Him,

He will not allow thee, foolish man, to be concerned even for a moment with anything else.

And if He does allow thee so to concern thyself, it is because He has secretly placed a cup in thy sack.⁹

Why is it so difficult for thee to go when the Lord of the World has said to thee:

“If thou come walking towards Me, I will come running to welcome thee.”¹⁰

God is calling thee but thou art asleep. Why dost thou linger, O distraught one?

Thou art not less than a camel, O man of the Court which moves along to the sound of a bell.’

(4) Story of Aṣma’ī,¹¹ his host and the negro camel-driver¹²

‘The peerless sage Aṣma’ī relates: “One night I set out on a journey in Arabia.

The next day a generous man made me his guest. I saw in his tent a negro in great affliction;

[*Ri.* 290]

Shackled from head to foot with chains, he gave out piteous moans as on the shortest string of the lute.

His heart was as straitened as the eye of an ant and all of the negro temperament had deserted that negro.

I asked that hapless one why he was shackled.

He answered: ‘I committed a crime and therefore I am afflicted with these chains and shackles.

A guest has greater claims on my master than can be uttered in words.

If thou wilt now ask him to pardon me, he will do so for his guest’s sake.’ ”

When the table was set and the master sat down, Aṣma’ī did not reach out his hand to the bread.

That excellent man asked him why he held back his hand.

[*Ro.* 229]

Aṣma’ī answered: “Because of the negro my heart is too heavy for me to touch thy bread.”

For I cannot drink my life’s blood. But if thou wilt pardon him, I will eat thy bread.”

Said his host: “May the negro’s soul be consumed in fire!

So much has he plagued me that his very life is in danger at my hands. What shall I say? For his crime is great indeed.”

Said Aṣma’ī: “What then is his crime? Tell me master.” His host

replied: "This wicked negro

Was driving four hundred sturdy camels, all heavily loaded, in the heat of the day,

Urging them forward at great speed by singing a plaintive melody,

So that those camels without food or sleep, travelled ten stages in that heat.

The sweet-voiced negro and his plaintive melody caused the camels to fly along the road.

Keeping up the melody he made the camels drunk with pleasure,

And after their long and difficult journey all four hundred perished.

He had sung to those heavily loaded camels until they died of thirst.

[*Ri. 291*]

Four hundred camels killed by a song! I cannot tell thee what anguish I suffered."—

Thou art less than an animal in thy endurance of the pain of this rod. How can I take thee for a traveller along this road?

O generous man, if the camel have its song, thou hast a hundred voices coming from the divine presence.

Affected by a single song an animal delivers up its soul under the load of love.

Message after message reaches thee from God—art thou lower of rank than an animal?

God created thee for Himself; He redeemed thy soul and property from thee.

But thou art concerned only with thyself; in self-regard thou art worse than Satan.

With thy existence God gave thee a hundred treasures; in thy drunken state thou hast spent them all in the company of Satan.

God called thee to be with Him for ever but thou hast gone out after Satan.¹⁸

God sees every single one of thy deeds; but thou, like a mote, followest thy own desire.

Thou hast wasted all of thy life in this world, for thou hast never appreciated its true worth.

[*Ro. 230*]

But wait! Perhaps on this road the veil will suddenly fall from thy eyes.

When thy disgrace is revealed to thee, thy soul will be consumed in the fire of confusion.'

(5) Story of Gabriel and Joseph¹⁴

'When Joseph was cast into the pit Gabriel came suddenly down from his heavenly abode,

And said: "Be of good cheer in the pain of separation, for thou shalt be saved from this pit.

God Almighty will free thee from sorrow; He will bestow upon thee greatness in the kingdom of Egypt.

He will set a crown of glory on thy head; He will send the Egyptians before thy door.

[*Ri. 292*]

He will bring the whole world under thy sway; He will bring a whole world of people to thee as thy guests.

He will cause thy ten brothers to appear before thee begging for bread.

Tell me now, whilst thou art in this pit: when thy eye falls on them then,

Wilt thou imprison them, or set up a gibbet, or put them to death in some other way?

Or wilt thou with rod or scourge cause a stream of blood to flow from each one of them?"

Said Joseph to Gabriel: "When they come, I shall call them to me at once.

I shall not speak of their selling me nor of the pit, but I shall cast back the veil from my face,

And if they bow low before me, what shall I say but ' "Know ye what ye did?"'¹⁵

Do you not feel remorse for the suffering you caused to Joseph?"

It will be enough to take them thus by surprise; this of itself will be a grievous punishment for them.

Though their hearts should be made of stone, yet they would be torn to pieces by such shame."—

Thy heart is dead if it be a stranger to this pain; for what is living cannot but feel pain.

Thou art inexperienced, this tale does not please thee; for fire will fall only on tinder.

Thou art like wax; burn day and night that fire may proclaim that thou art alight.¹⁶

Thou hast had no benefit from any other—why then hast thou concerned thyself with any other?

Since thou hast always been concerned with thyself, journey within thyself without stirring feet or hands.

[*Ro. 231*]

If thou walk for a moment within thyself, consider that as walking through the world with a hundred hearts.

Better for thee to see a single blemish in thyself than to behold a hundred lights from the Unseen.'

[*Ri. 293*]

(6) Story of Khālū the sage of Sarakhs¹⁷

There was a sage of Sarakhs called Khālū, who often passed his time in the company of Khiḍr.

In a certain place there lived a fervent young man, his soul as young as his body.

His heart was drenched in the light of truth, his entire occupation was to stand in readiness.

Khiḍr went to visit the aged dervish bringing the young man with him.

The young man sat down and the sage, out of kindness, said to him: "How art thou occupied, young man?"

The young man replied: "Who is young here? For it is now full ten years

That from thinking of the Beloved I have been unaware for a single moment of my kernel or shell."

When the wise sage heard these words of his, he said: "O mighty and generous man,

It is impossible for me to think of Him. All I know is that for sixty years now

I am so concerned with my faults that I cannot forget them for a moment.

Seeing myself nought but faults and shame how shall I, in my uncleanness, see the Unseen?

For good or ill, because of my shame I cannot concern myself with Him for a single instance.

Only when this privy is cleansed of filth can I hope to see the Beloved.

But with such filth in my breast this happiness can never be.

Wouldst thou have purity, thou must become pure; otherwise thou shalt drink blood and return to the dust.

What canst thou do with power, when thou art a sun shining down upon uncleanness.

First purify thyself and then only look; do not walk the road in ignorance but look for pitfalls.

[*Ri. 294*]

To seek musk in uncleanness is the same as to seek dry earth in the sea."

These words so affected the young man that it was as though the soul for shame had quitted the body.

He trembled, groaned and fell headlong. He became such that one cannot say how he became.

Khidr said to Khālū: "O heart-illuminating sage, do not smite him with that deadly blade.

[*Ro.* 232]

This is work for the great ones of this world; it is no task for delicate youths.

One must make allowances for a drunken man; the bow must match the strength of the arm."—

Thou art at this moment drunk with a love that rejoices thy heart; now in ecstasy and now in exaltation.

Thou needest a special wine, O drunkard, that will free thee altogether from thyself.

Whatever removes thee from thyself, that is thy wine—not the juice of the grape.

If thou canst distinguish drunkenness from non-existence thou knowest what lies behind the curtain of mysteries.

When a certain kind of drunkenness has overcome a man he knows that all existence is non-existent.

When thou canst not distinguish non-existence from drunkenness, thou art simply drunk; do not boast of non-existence.'

(7) Story of Shaikh Yaḥyā son of Ma'ādh¹⁸ and Bāyazīd¹⁹

'Yaḥyā son of Ma'ādh, that candle of Islam, wrote a letter to the sage of Bisṭām,

Saying: "What has the Shaikh of the Faith to say of a man who drank a pure and holy draught

From which he has suffered a headache, day and night, for thirty years?"

There came this reply from Bāyazīd: "Here a man has a wine

[*Ri.* 295]

In which he has drunk in one moment the sea, the earth, the empyrean and the firmament. What more wouldst thou know?

He is still crying 'Is there any more?' If thou do not know him, he is Bāyazīd."—

Why hast thou lost consciousness without drinking wine? Thou camest sober and hast departed drunk.

Thou showest thyself to be empty-handed indeed; for thou appearest to be drunk from an empty cup.

Thousands of seas of the coin of this world are filled to the brim for the elect soul.

If one can get drunk from a single draught of wine, how can one drink a whole sea?

If thou art drunk with a heart-illuminating love, thou wilt die and burn at a single command.

Otherwise thou art drunk with thyself like a drunkard—and how can drunkards walk?

Walk in accordance with the commandments, if thou canst stand upright, for if thou art drunk thou canst not walk a single step.

For the lover that does not obey has no cure if he have a pain.”

[Ro. 233]

(8) Story of Shaikh ‘Alī Rūdabārī²⁰

‘Certain fellow-countrymen of Bu-‘Alī Rūdabārī have reported his words to this effect:

“I entered the bath one day and saw a fresh young man of great charm.

His cheeks were like the moon of the heavens and his form like a cypress in the garden.

I saw his locks falling to his feet; I saw a whole world animated by his face.

When the sun of his face shone the heavens could not move until they became his slaves.

There were a hundred thousand ringlets in his hair for which it was nothing to ravish a hundred souls.

[Ri. 296]

The sight would read upon his face, in his eyes, of its own pain and suffering as in the two works known as *Ṣaḥīḥ*.²¹

But the heart would say ‘How can this pain and grief be cured by those languishing eyes?

For the languor in them has made thy healthy eyes unhealthy.’

The down on his cheek had a mandate over heart and soul. Yes, it had this mandate because of his face.²²

This down was as fresh as the Garden of Iram,²³ and his lips were deep red.

His teeth were pearls of bone compared with which true pearls were blacker than Hindus.

The silver-limbed one was haughtily squatted facing the bath.

A Ṣūfī stood waiting upon him, his gaze fixed upon the young man’s face.

Now he poured water over his head, now he prepared him a cool drink.

Now he massaged his arms and back; now he rubbed his legs with a pumice-stone.

When that silver-limbed one was cleansed, he rose out of the bath like the sun.

That Ṣūfī ran up and helped him out; he brought a cloth to dry him.

Then he laid a prayer rug beneath the loved one's feet.

Then he put his clothes on him and cast aloes-wood in the censer.

He brought rose-water and sprinkled it on his face; he powdered the locks of his hair with wormwood.

He quickly moved a fan and caused a breeze to blow upon that rose.

[*Ri.* 297]

Though he increased his services every moment, yet he was contemptible in the sight of that fair one.

The Ṣūfī opened his mouth and said: 'O moon-like one, what dost thou wish of this poor lost Ṣūfī?

[*Ro.* 234]

What must I do for thee to be pleased with me? Tell me how long thou wilt be angry with me?

Thou art always too proud to look at me. What can this poor wretch do to please thee?"

Hearing these words from the Ṣūfī the young man said to him: 'Die and be free of my disdain.'

Hearing this from that moon-like one the Ṣūfī heaved a sigh and all at once died.

So quickly did he die because of his perfect love that it was as though he had never lived."

Wretch, if thou canst not depart in like manner, how shalt thou rest in the earth?

If thou die in this manner, thou shalt be saved; otherwise thy feet shall be bound until Judgment Day.

Bū-'Alī wrapped him in a winding-sheet and departing from thence went about his own affairs.

One day he was walking cheerfully through the desert, alone and fire-like.

He saw the young man in a dervish's cloak, with bleeding heart, his cheeks like saffron, his condition completely changed.

He went up to the shaikh and said: "I am that young man who killed such-and-such a one with his pretensions.

I killed that mighty man and because of that wickedness I have become as I am.

Now this young man has vowed to God to make the pilgrimage every year in that man's memory.

For his sake I make the pilgrimage on foot; for the rest of the time I lie prostrate on his grave.

Alas! I was a man for gold and power; I did not see his perfection; I was blind.

Now I grieve every moment for his suffering; night and day I grieve for that man."—

If thou have even an atom of this feeling, thou must love like this.

[*Ri. 298*]

But what do I say? What man of battle art thou! In time of love thou art neither woman nor man.

In this assembly thou canst not die whole; thou must die with a burning heart like a candle.

Thou must rise up out of thyself; love and well-being do not go together.'

(9) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and the trickster²⁴

'Maḥmūd was proceeding along the road in all his majesty when a trickster happened to cross his path.

Said the king: "Cutpurse, highwayman, thou art here because thou hopest

To sit in the dust of the road and teach the king thy legerdemain."

The trickster answered: "Be off and take thy ease. Of what use is this to thee?

[*Ro. 235*]

Legerdemain goes together with kettle-drum and standard no better than the moth with the candle.

Strip thyself of everything and then follow this trade. Otherwise reflect as follows:

In this abode in which neither heart nor soul can be retained perfection can be attained only by staking one's all."

(10) Story of Shaikh Abū Sa'īd and the gambler²⁵

'The Shaikh of Mihna²⁶ happened to go out in the desert and encountered upon the road a crowd of men moving rapidly along,

All keeping in step with one another; they wore leather breeches.

Upon their shoulders they were joyfully carrying a man; he was surrounded on every side by libertines.

The Shaikh of the Age asked: "Who is this man?" They answered: "O peerless one,

He is the prince of all gamblers, for he is a master in his craft."

The world-illuminating shaikh asked the man: "To what dost thou owe this rank thou holdest today?"

[*Ri. 299*]

The impure libertine replied: "I owe it to having lost my all."

The shaikh gave out a cry and said: "Dost thou know that this man has the mark of one who loses all?"

Therefore he is a prince and exalted over the world; for to play ill is to bring sudden disaster upon thyself."—

All those lions that were men of the Road were foxes in the world of love.

Walk carefully; look well; be wise. Calamities rain down upon thee here. Beware!

If thou be willing to lay down thy head, to yield up thy body to destruction,

Then shalt thou in this manner lost thy all; otherwise thou art deficient and unclean.

If thou wilt be like those who stake all, do not keep even a needle, as Jesus did.²⁷

If thou have only a needle, that needle will be a screen in front of thee, neither more nor less.'

(11) Story of Majnūn and Lailā²⁸

'One day Majnūn was allowed the opportunity to sit with Lailā.

She said to him: "O my lover, give me whatever thou hast."

Majnūn replied: "O moon-like one, for love of thee I am left without water or well.

[*Ro.* 236]

I have no moisture in my liver nor sleep in my eyes at night.

My love for thee has robbed me of my stock of reason. All that is left is my life. A sign from thee,

And if thou wish it, I will give it thee; be sure I will give it thee most certainly."

Said bold-hearted Lailā: "How should I take that from thee? Give me something else."

Majnūn gave Lailā a needle saying: "This is all I now possess in both worlds.

It is all I have in the whole clime; this is my entire capital, apart from this I have nothing.

[*Ri.* 300]

And this I kept by me because I often stumbled in the desert,

When seeking a sweetheart such as thou, and a thorn would break off in my foot as in a rose;

And lying where I had fallen, with this needle I would extract the thorn from my foot."

Then said Lailā to Majnūn: "It was this that I have been seeking of thee.

Hadst thou been sincere in thy love, what need wouldst thou have had of this needle?

If, O distraught one, while seeking a sweetheart such as I, a thorn should enter thy foot,

It is not fitting for thee to extract it with a needle, and if thou do so, it is not the act of a faithful lover.

A thorn of which the virtue is such that it guides thee to reunion with thy beloved—

It is wrong to extract it with a needle, for it is wrong for a lover to do aught but suffer.

Since the thorn entered thy foot because of me, thou shouldst look on it as a rose pinned to thy cloak.

Art thou inferior to the rose-bush which endures the thorn for a year in hopes of the rose?

A thorn in thy foot on account of Lailā is better than a hundred roses woven into a garland by another.””

Discourse XIX

There came the sixth son, his heart filled with mysteries, raining pearls from the diamond of his tongue.

He said to the father: 'It is my constant desire to practise alchemy.

If I can acquire the science of alchemy, all the people of the world will turn to me for the philosophers' stone.

If I achieve that fortune I shall achieve faith also, for if I have the one I shall have the other.

By myself I will fill the world with peace; I will make the poor rich.'

[Ro. 237]

[Ri. 301]

Father's reply

The father said to him: 'Thy heart is overcome with greed; therefore it is that it seeks the philosophers' stone.

What wouldst thou with this base world, this haunt of deceit and hatred?

For the world in an old hag with seven veils, having donned all seven to seduce thee.

I perceive that from greed thou hast lost all repose; thou art as restless as a bird caught in a snare.

For dust is the food on the bird of greed; only on dust does it ever eat its fill.'¹

(1) Story of the beast called Halū'²

'Aṭā,³ that man of Khorasan, says that there is a beast equal in size to a hundred mountains.

It dwells on the far side of the mountain called Qāf.⁴

The name of that enormous beast is Halū', for it is a voracious eater.⁵

In front of it are seven plains covered with grass; behind it there are seven seas within its reach.

It comes in the early morning and eats all the grass on the seven plains.

Having stripped in an instant the seven plains it drains in a single draught all the seven seas.

And having finished eating it cannot sleep a wink at night for worry and anxiety,

Thinking, "What shall I eat here tomorrow? I have eaten everything. What shall I do?"

But the next day the Almighty replenishes the plains and seas once again.—

Because man's greed is absolute, therefore God calls him *Halū'*.

How is it that a spark of fire, wont to rear its head so high, bows down again when it touches a piece of wood?

[*Ri. 302*]

If thou have in thee today a single spark of greed, it too will bow down in order to consume thee.

It is better therefore if thou knowest how to scatter water upon the fire.

Otherwise thou shalt be neither sober nor drunk but shalt remain a fire-worshipper in all eternity.

And if thou have ill-gotten goods to the extent of a single grain, for that one grain thou shalt suffer eternal punishment.'

(2) Story of Jesus⁶

'One day the Spirit of God, that heart-illuminating candle, was passing through a cemetery.

[*Ro. 238*]

From a grave the sound of a moan came to his ear and his heart welled up with pity.

He offered up a prayer and in a single moment God brought the man back to life as speedily as a thought.

It was an old man bent like a bow. He greeted Jesus and then stood still for a while.

The Messiah said to him: "Who art thou, old man? When didst thou die and at what time wert thou alive?"

He answered: "O sea of mysteries, I am, wretched as thou seest me, *Ḥaiyān* the son of *Ma'bad*.

It is 1,800 years, O pure one, since I died and was laid in the earth.

I have no rest from this misery, I have not a single moment's respite."

The Messiah said: "O thou whose sleep has been disturbed, why hast thou been so tormented?"

He answered: "I suffer this painful torment because of a piece of land belonging to an orphan."

Said the Messiah: "Didst thou die an unbeliever to have suffered such pain on account of a piece of land?"

The men answered: "I died a Muslim and yet have suffered this pain

for all these years.”

[*Ri.* 303]

Then Jesus the Pure prayed that he might henceforth sleep in peace in his grave.—

O Muslims, if this be Islam, I do not know what faith is that which I see.

If thou have a single grain of ill-gotten goods thou shalt be tormented for 1,800 years.

And if thy goods be ill-gotten from beginning to end, what can I say? Thou shalt be tormented for ever.

My dear son, since thou hast no one thou canst trust, be concerned with thyself, for there is no one else to concern himself about thee.

Thou hast no strength; do not raise thy head, but acquit thyself of thy debt to thy adversary.

For since thou hast not Jesus the Pure beside thee, then shalt thou suffer in thy grave much torment at the hands of thy adversary.

Thou dost not know how to act; all thou canst do is shorten thy life and increase thy wealth.

Thou dost not realise that whilst thou strivest after silver thou carelessly sellest thy golden life.

Do not amass gold like heated quicksilver, for like quicksilver thou wilt vanish away.

Gold is for the most part buried under the ground because so many men have died on account of it.

Gold is enclosed within rock in the mountains, and yet the miser grips it more tightly than does that rock.

A single pick will cause a rock to yield up its silver; but a hundred picks will not extract a piece of land from a miser.

Bestow, in thy generosity, a hundred treasures, but do not lose a single grain of thy manliness.

He is best who gives bread, for it is better to give bread than orders.

But it is better to be trampled to death by elephants than to eat bread from the hands of a miser.’

[*Ro.* 239]

(3) Story of Nūshīrvān the Just?

‘Said Nūshīrvān the Just: “If thou die by the sharp blade of the killer,

[*Ri.* 304]

That sword-blow is better for thee than to eat thy fill of the bread of a base man.”—

Do not quarrel with the people of this world, for the world is carrion and they are maggots upon it.

The people of this world, when they wield power, are so many maggots in the midst of filth.

Gold and silver, fortune and success will be of no use to thee at thy last breath.

If thou have sincerity at that moment, it will serve thee well; otherwise, woe upon thy soul!

Whatever is perfection in this present world, be sure it is perdition in the world to come.'

(4) Story about reprobation of the world

'The Lord of the Law gave a legal ruling saying: "Whoever says a single word about the world,

Will be kept out of paradise for five hundred years strictly counted.

What then if he says two words? For the more he says the longer his absence.

Whoever passes his life in this world is a strong man if he die in the faith.

If thou kill thyself upon the road of this world, thou shalt not find thyself again in the world to come.

What can come of this world but remorse? Dost thou not know what will come of ignorance?''

(5) Story about reprobation of the world

'Thus said a man of pure essence: "He that loves the world is less than a dog.

For this deceitful world is a heap of carrion surrounded by snarling dogs.

But when a dog has eaten his fill of it he leaves it for another dog.

He in no way lays up a store of it or thinks in the least of the morrow.

But he that is desirous of the world is constantly running, like a ball, after his desire.

[Ro. 240]

[Ri. 305]

Like a ball he is constantly running, from force of habit, in order to increase for one moment his share of the world.

When he can no more look for more than one day of life he has upon his soul the cares of a hundred years.

Now since a dog seeks no more of that carrion than his immediate requirements,

He is superior to the man who burns night and day, with the hot flame of greed.'''

(6) Words of 'Abbāsa of Tūs regarding the world⁸

'Thus said 'Abbāsa: "The world is in reality like a pile of carrion thrown on to the rubbish-heap.

When the lions have eaten their fill of this carrion, the panthers come and fall upon it.

When the panthers have eaten and departed, there arrive great numbers of dogs and wolves.

When only a little is left, flocks of crows fly in from every side.

The crows eat these remains and there is left only a little dung and blood.

Then comes a black beetle and turns this dung and blood over this way and that.

When nothing is left but a fleshless bone the sun shines fiercely upon it; A little fat oozes out, and swarms of ants run up from every side.

When the ants have eaten that fat, nothing is left on the roadside but a dry bone.

The lions," 'Abbāsa says, "are the kings, the panthers that come after them are the emirs.

The dogs and wolves are their followers and the crows their underlings.

The blackbeetle is the tax-collector at work, and as for the ants they are hangers-on of all these people."—

[*Ri.* 306]

My friend, I do not know thy name, but consider thyself which of these thou art.

The whole world, good friend, is like so much carrion, and he that runs after it is even greater carrion.

He that runs after carrion is a hundred times worse than carrion.'

(7) Words of Ja'far Ṣādiq⁹

'The holy have recorded these words of Ja'far Ṣādiq:

This carrion world is a barren and desolate land, but a hundred times more desolate is the heart of that man

[*Ro.* 241]

Who wishes this world to flourish so that he may sit on a throne in it.

The world to come is a cultivated and flourishing land, but even more flourishing is that enlightened heart

Which wishes to be flourishing only in the world to come, is content with little and abandons this present world to the pillagers.'

(8) Story of Yaḥyā Ma'adh Rāzī¹⁰

'Yaḥyā Ma'adh, that initiate in the divine mysteries, passed in the course of a journey through a pleasant village.

Someone said to him: "This is a fine village." Yaḥyā answered like fire: "Finer is the heart of a perfect man who has no need for fine villages."

(9) Story about reprobation of the world

'Some asked a jurisconsult: "What is better than worldly wealth?"

He answered: "Wealth that is not, for if it be it is pure loss.

For if wealth come to thee from the world it will keep thee apart from God.

[*Ri.* 307]

Of what value is worldly wealth if thou art parted for a time from God?

If wealth keep thee apart from God it would be better if it did not exist at all."

Having been waylaid by the pleasures of the world how shalt thou be an idol-breaker for the Faith?

O thou who hast fallen asleep on the road, all thy life is night; thou knowest nothing of the day or of being awake.

But the dawn will make it clear to thee to whom thou hast been making love.

Every moment when thou art not engaged in love of the Faith, thou art the companion of a fiery dragon.'

(10) Story of the prince and his bride¹¹

'There was a prince of sun-like splendour, who was the light of his father's eyes.

The king decided to seek for the prince a bride of true beauty,

Who in fairness of face was a paragon throughout the world, the fairest of the fair ones created by the Eternal Designer.

[*Ro.* 242]

For that moonlike one the king decorated a palace, nay, not a palace, but a paradise—

A palace crowded from end with houris upon houris, lit up with lights upon lights from these many suns and moons.

So many amber-perfumed candles side by side that night that each hair could be distinguished from the next.

From the rhythm of the poetry and the sound of the lute it was as though

at every moment the murmur of a stream was mingling with the roar of the sea.¹²

From yearning for the seven colours of the palace the “seven heavens one above another”¹³ were put to shame.

Such was the bride, so pleasant the feast, so fair and ravishing the company.

So they sat, a paradise full of houris, waiting for the prince to arrive at that banquet.

Now the prince in his joy had sat with a company over wine.

[*Ri.* 308]

So much wine had he drunk in his joy that he had forgotten even his own existence.

Head bowed forward he suddenly sprang up remembering his bride.

In the midst of the tumult he mounted horse, drunk as he was, and rose out through the gate in the town wall.

No road was visible in front of him; he had no companion at his side.

In the distance he descried a lofty monastery, the lights of which illuminated the whole vicinity.

Drunk and separated from his companions he thought it was his bride's palace there in the distance.

But it was a tower of silence built by the Guebres, with many corpses on every side.

Several lamps were burning in the tower lighting up the hearts of the fire-worshippers.

In front of the tower was a couch on which lay a wretched woman,

Wrapped in a winding-sheet. The prince, seeing her from afar,

Thought, in the drunkenness of wine, that she was his royal bride.

In his drunkenness he could not tell head from foot not the way to the roof from the way to the door.

He removed the winding-sheet from the corpse's face; he drew back the veil from the object of his desire.

Striking a tender note he put his tongue in the dead woman's mouth.

He passed the night with her, his lips sweetly pressed against hers.

All that night the hundred moon-shaped ones had been seated waiting for the prince to come in at the door.

Now when that lofty prince failed to appear, they at once informed his father.

He rose up and with a body of horsemen rode into the countryside, filled with anxiety.

All the ministers came also; in the distance they caught sight of the prince's horse.

[*Ri.* 309]

[*Ro.* 243]

Seeing his horse the father turned in that direction and then dismounted.

He saw his son upon the couch with the dead woman, holding her like a mistress in a tight embrace.

Seeing him thus, in the presence of his army, the king felt as though a fire was burning in the depths of his soul

When the son had come to himself a little, the king and the army went up to him.

At once he opened his eyes from the sleep of drunkenness, and saw that secluded spot and the lofty king;

A dead woman held tightly in his embrace, the king and the army standing beside him.

He realised what had happened and felt that he must die at once.

Shame for his untimely adventure caused his limbs to fall a-trembling.

The only desire of his pure heart was for the earth to open up and swallow him.

But since the thing had happened, his shame and confusion were of no avail.—

As for me, O drunkard, I can wait until that light comes to thy pillow.

Then thou wilt know and see with whom thou hast kept company.

Like Abraham break idols for the Faith; carry off the idols of Āzar.¹⁴

When Abraham set about that task, the Lord of the World put him to the test.

If thou art put to the test, thou shalt be disgraced before all the world.'

(11) Story of Abraham¹⁵

'I know from what is written in the *Tales*¹⁶ that the Prophet Abraham was such

That he had forth thousand slaves each of whom had a dog at his command,

[*Ri.* 310]

All of the dogs with collars of gold. As for his sheep it was impossible to count them.

The angels, seeing his prosperous state, began to have doubts about him,

Saying: "He is occupied with all these sheep, and yet God calls him pure and exalted.

If he were entirely absorbed in the Glorious Lord, he would not keep even a toothbrush, for he is the Friend."

But God said to the faithful Gabriel: "Go and speak clearly to him of Us

So that thou mayst see where he is upon Our road and how he behaves before Our threshold."

The Holy Spirit took upon him the tangible shape of a man and said in a melodious voice: "God the Holy."

[Ro. 244]

When the Friend of God heard his voice, it was as though he that held his head so high had fallen to the ground.

He bestowed a third of his sheep upon him and said: "O healer of them that suffer,

Utter the name of my Friend once again, for that name is my constant consoler."

Again he said: "God the Holy" and again out of his great yearning Abraham fell to the ground.

That crown of the exalted bestowed upon him another third of his sheep.

Again he said to him: "Utter the name of God once again, for there is nothing better than this."

Again he said "God the Holy", and again Abraham fell in a swoon.

He bestowed his whole flock upon Gabriel not holding back a single ewe.

Then Gabriel showed himself, saying: "O pure one, I am the Holy Spirit in an earthly mould.

These sheep are not for me; they are all thine, O pure and spotless one.

For Gabriel the Faithful never came to a door begging for roast meat."

[Ri. 311]

Said the Friend of God: "Thou knowest this of me that what I have once given I will take back from no one."

Said Gabriel: "I am no shepherd. I go now. Do as thou seest fit."

Said the Friend of God: "I for my part renounce every single beast."

There came a Voice from God to the angels saying: "How then was Abraham the Wealthy?

When Gabriel pronounced Our name, he sacrificed all his possessions for Our name.

Now you know for certain that he is a true servant and that he lives for Our name, not for his wealth."

The angels answered: "Perhaps, O Lord, his heart is attached to his child."

Then God called upon him in a dream to deliver up his son.

When he brought out his son to sacrifice him causing the earth to revolve like the heavens,

The angels gave out a cry, saying, "He is detached from his goods and his child,

But he lives at this moment for himself; his life is more precious to him than anything else."

It was decreed by the Unseen and Omniscient that he should be put to the trial of fire.

Finally when he was imprisoned in the fire, Gabriel came down from the zenith of mysteries,

And said: "Ask me for whatever thou wishest." He answered: "I wish nothing of thee, for thou art not the Friend.

[Ro. 245]

For if I ask of another than He, I shall be a stranger to His Court.

I am completely detached from self; believe this of me. Let God do what He pleases."

Seeing how he bore himself the angels gave out a cry in admiration of his loyalty,

[Ri. 312]

Saying, "O God, he is pure of body and of heart; he is superior to all Thy trials.

So great have we found his love for Thee that fire is cold by comparison with its warmth.

His heart has turned hell into a paradise; what a friendship is his!

If Thou call him Thy friend, he deserves it; and if Thou boast of him, he deserves it even more."—

If thou be not guided by the faith of Abraham, thou dost but follow the path of Āzar.¹⁷

Though thou art without silver or gold, yet thou hast the nature of Nimrod and Āzar.

Thou marvellest how a Nimrod could have become such as to ascend into the heavens and make war on God.¹⁸

And yet if thy affairs go awry, thy heart on that day follows the path of Nimrod.

Thy anger and lust reach such a pitch that they raise thee into the air like vultures.

Thy anger and hatred swell up until the coffer of thy heart rises up to the heavens.

Having vultures and a coffer thou showest the world a sign that thou art a Nimrod.

Since a hundred arrows of denial discharged by thy hand strike every moment upon this revolving compass,

The nature of Nimrod is still in thee; like him thou art making war on God.

Thou art then in thy works thyself a Nimrod, in weal or woe according to thy good or evil.

Thou art chained in thy desire to increase thy riches, thy whole body soaked in blood.

When thy life comes to an end, what wilt thou do, having sat all this time adding to thy pile of gold?

Thy whole life, my friend, has been a loss in order that thou mightest

make a profit of one grain upon thy gold.

When a man's whole ambition is centred upon a few filings of metal he is less than a ritually impure woman.

The Prophet said that a rich man was a dead man; therefore he that possesses silver is a corpse.

Why should the dog of thy greed possess a whole world? A bone is enough for this dog.

[Ro. 246]

[Ri. 313]

Thy carnal soul, infidel that it is, has made thee drunk; it has trodden thee under the feet of indifference.¹⁹

If thou do not occupy it with some task it will deprive thee of thy livelihood.'

(12) Story of Hallāj and his son²⁰

'Hallāj said to his son: "O virtuous one, keep thy carnal soul occupied with some task,

Otherwise it will remove thee from thy vocation and employ thee in a hundred unworthy ways.

For thou art not upon the Road a man of such strong essence that thou alone wilt breathe at the Appointed Time.

Thou wilt entertain vain desires as long as thy carnal soul is with thee; perfection consists in restraining that soul.

For if that dog eat its fill for a while it turns (strange to relate) into a lion.

Once its belly has been filled for a while its tongue grows hungry for slander.

It unsheathes its tongue like a sharp sword—and with slander it kills a whole host of people.

Though thou whisper in its ear: 'Enough!' thou canst not silence it for an instant.

Whoever opens his mouth to utter slander receives every moment some hurt from the unseen world."'

(13) On the saying that slander is a great sin²¹

'It is recorded in the Torah that he that utters slanders and then Repents thereof will be the last person whom the Friend will admit into the courtyard of paradise.

And if he do not repent he will be the very first person to enter hell.

[*Ri.* 314]

But if the blade of his flame-like tongue becomes as straight as a lance from Khatt,²²

It will be a sign that his heart too is straight, for this is the first abode of the heart.

However in this abode the great ones of the world will find no better wine for their souls than silence.'

(14) Words of a certain man regarding silence²³

'There was a great man who was fond of conversation and who had travelled a great deal in the world.

[*Ro.* 247]

Someone said to him: "O wise companion, whom hast thou seen who is worthy of mention?"

He answered: "I have travelled through all the seven climes and in the whole world I have seen only one and a half men.

The whole man was one who remained in a corner and said neither good nor ill of anyone.

And the half man was one who out of goodness spoke only kindly of everybody."—

Whilst good and ill accompany thee, thy heart will not see nor thy soul be aware.

But when both have left thee, then thou canst concern thyself with the secret of sanctity.'

Discourse XX

The son said: 'Excessive poverty often leads to loss of faith.

With gold both the Faith and the world can be promoted; therefore one may ask God both for the philosophers' stone and for gold.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'Gold has cast its shadow over thee and deprived thee of thy essence and nature.

The Faith and the world cannot both be promoted at the same time: know that thou canst not ask God for both.'

[*Ri. 315*]

(1) Story of the shaikh and the Christian¹

'A shaikh, benign of heart and initiated into the mysteries, went out one night into the market place

To pick up a few green vegetables for his supper or breakfast.

A Christian on a bay horse tightly girthed with jewel-studded saddle

Crossed his path in the market preceded and followed by a large body of slaves.

Seeing all this the shaikh felt his heart enflamed; he was filled with shame at his own poverty.

Addressing himself to God he said: "O Lord, Thou wishest this state for him but not for me.

I am one of Thy friends and he is one of Thy enemies, but thou wishest me to be as I am and him as he is.

A Christian living in comfort, wealth and honour and a Muslim thus poor and wretched.

[*Ro. 248*]

On Thy friend thou bestowest nought but suffering, on Thy enemy riches and caresses.

To him that Thou hast called Thou givest neither bread nor clothing, but Thou givest a horse and a turban to him that Thou hast rejected."

When that afflicted shaikh had uttered these secret thoughts, he heard within his breast a Voice from the unseen, saying:

“O believer, if thou so wish, exchange everything with that Christian.

Give what thou hast, poor though thou art, and take what is his; and thou shalt be satisfied.

Exchange thy Islam for his Christianity; give thy poverty and take his riches; and do as thou wilt.

If We have given him dirhems and dinars, We have given thee, O man, faith and a vision.

Repudiate thy faith and take the dinars; cast aside the *khirqa*² and don the *zunndr*.”

[*Ri.* 316]

When these secret words penetrated that pure man's heart he swooned and fell to the ground.

When the unconscious man recovered his consciousness, having left his being on one side and his understanding on the other,

He cried out, saying: “O my God, never would I consent to such an exchange.

Never would I consent to it; I repent, never again will I think such thoughts.”—

The Friend with a hundred arts has made thee beautiful; do not cast that beauty from thee again.

Thou art wrapped up in self-conceit; thou art drunk; rise out of thyself, live only for God, and thou shalt be saved.

If thou have the slightest mark of the Divine Presence, thou shalt have all that there is in both worlds.’

(2) Words of a holy man about the knowledge of God

‘A holy man, one of the shaikhs upon this road, said: “Since I have known God,

I have known neither security nor insecurity, neither friendship with anyone nor enmity.”—

Now I have told thee the secrets as I ought; do thou henceforward act as thou shouldst.’

(3) Story of Zubaida and the Ṣūfī

‘Zubaida was seated on a camel-litter, journeying auspiciously upon the Pilgrimage.

A gust of wind blew the curtain to one side: a Ṣūfī caught sight of her and fell headlong to the ground.

He set up such a crying and commotion that no one could silence him.

[Ro. 249]

Perceiving that Ṣūfī Zubaida whispered to a eunuch:

[Ri. 317]

“Free me quickly from his noise even though it cost thee much gold.”

The eunuch offered the man a purse of gold: he would not take it, but when he was offered ten purses he gave way.

Having accepted the ten purses of gold, he ceased at once to cry and to utter pitiful moans.

Zubaida, perceiving the true state of affairs, that that Ṣūfī had turned away from the mystery of love,

Told the eunuch to bind his hands and to break his seven limbs with blows of the rod.

He cried out: “What then did I do that I should suffer these endless blows?”

Said Zubaida: “O lover of thyself, what wilt thou do henceforth, liar that thou art?

Thou didst pretend to love such a one as I, and yet when thou wert shown gold thou hadst enough of loving me.

I have found thee nought but pretence from head to feet, and I find thy pretence to be false.

Thou shouldst have sought after me; since thou didst not I knew for certain that thou wert feeble in action.

Hadst thou sought after me, all my goods and property, all my gold and silver, would have been thine absolutely.

But since thou soldest me I resolved to punish thy ardour.

Thou shouldst have sought after me, O foolish man, and then all would have been thine at once.”—

Fix thy heart on God and thou shalt be saved; if thou fix thy heart on men thou shalt be afflicted.

Close tightly to thyself all other doors; seek out His door and fix thy heart upon it entirely,

So that through the dark cloud of separation may shine the light of the dawn of knowledge.

If thou find that light thou shalt find also the way to knowledge.⁴

The saints that raised their heads to the moon were guided by the light of knowledge.’

(4) Story of Ardashīr,⁵ the Magian priest, and his son Shāpūr⁶

‘I have heard that Ardashīr the Brave had a wife⁷ who hated him.

[Ri. 318]

One day, because of her hatred, she brought the king some poisoned food.

But when, as she approached him, her glance fell upon the king, the bowl slipped from her hands and fell upon the threshold.

[Ro. 250]

She trembled and her face lost its colour; and her husband became suspicious of her.

He gave the food to a bird: the bird died and the king was dumbfounded.

At once he delivered up the woman to the chief Magian, saying: "Tear out the heart from her frame,

Shed her blood, bury her in the ground; free my heart from this faithless bitch."

Now the woman was with child by the wise king, and the king had no children.

The Magian thought: "If the king should fall suddenly into the snare of death,

Since he has no child to succeed him, there would be storms and tumults in his house.

It is best that I keep the woman hidden till I see what the world has in store."

But he feared lest, impossible though it was, someone might thereafter entertain some suspicion.

And lest some ill-wisher should make an accusation against him, he so acted that none could make such an accusation.

When the king discharged him with the execution, the Magian went off and castrated himself.

He placed his member in a box, then went to the king and asked for his seal.

He sealed the box with the king's seal. The king asked: "What hast thou there?"

The Magian answered: "Sire, when the time comes, it will be revealed to thee.

I have sealed the box with the seal of the victorious king with the date of today."

Having uttered these words that peerless man sent the box to the treasury.

[Ri. 319]

When several months had passed that wife of the king gave birth to a son as beautiful as the moon.

His face was like a sun shining in the night, as it were, that is, through his hair.

He was all courtesy, splendour and beauty; all grace, goodness and sweet temper.

Seeing the child's face from afar the Magian auspiciously bestowed on him the name of Shāpūr.⁸

Reverently he tended him day and night behind the veil of secrecy, bestowing a hundred cares upon him.

When he reached the proper age he appointed the proper instructors for him.

He lit his heart with knowledge as with fire; he quickly taught him the faith of Zoroaster.

When he had completed this instruction, he perfected himself in polo and archery.

He became a supreme master of the sword and the lance; his skill exceeded any words of mine.

[*Ro.* 251]

His lofty stature became like a moving cypress; his face as enchanting as the moon above a cypress.

When ambergris stood in attendance upon his hair it was like a Hindu magician.

His lips were a ruby goblet filled with wine about to be drunk by a newly sprouting beard.

He would shake a sleeve⁹ at every instant, for under his banner was a whole world.

One day the king was seated sad of face, with knitted brow.

The Magian asked: "Sire, what grief has overtaken thee?"

I do not find thee joyful as on other days: it saddens my heart to see thee seated in such sorrow."

The king replied: "I am not made of hard stone. There is no one but must go in the end.

[*Ri.* 320]

I am grieving because by the cruelty of fate I have not a single child

Who might take my place after me when Death shall have tightened his snare around my neck."

When that peerless man heard these words, a deluge of blood flowed from his eyes.

He said to the king: "I have a hidden secret which is one of the wonders of the world.

If the king will give me his pledge, I will reveal it, otherwise I will keep it concealed."

The king having given his pledge he told his story point by point.

Then that incomparable man ordered the box to be brought from the treasury.

When the king saw what faith and probity the Magian had shown in his fear of calumny

And when he heard the fame of his child and listened to the call of paternal love,

In his joy he did not know what to say or how to thank the Magian.

He said to him: "Dress a hundred children in the same manner as my Shāpūr and have them assemble in one place,

All dressed alike, of equal age and rank, their mounts and helmets alike and of equal height,

In order that my soul under the veil of secrecy may descry its own.

For with the light of knowledge it is possible to distinguish men from one another."

The wise Magian departed and the next day he brought a hundred beautiful children on to the public square,

All in the same clothes of the same colour and with the same helmets just as the king had ordered.

When the king came to view them he at once descried his son as though he stood alone amongst them all.

In one single glance he recognised him; he called him to him and embraced and caressed him.

[Ro. 252]

[Ri. 321]

For his sake he straightway forgave his mother; he showed great attention to the old sage who had taken such pains with his son.—

Know from this tale that it is through knowledge that every mote finds itself in the light.

If a mote does not find its way to the sun it will be cut off for ever like a stranger.

But if a mote finds knowledge it receives a hundred lights from the sun.^{'10}

(5) Story of Ayaz and his ophthalmia¹¹

'By the evil eye from the glance of strangers Ayaz was afflicted with ophthalmia.

Because of the pain his eyes became like blood; the vases of these narcissi took on the colour of tulips.

When ten days had passed the pain became too much for his eyes.

So much was he afflicted by the pain that he vomited and fainted away.

Someone informed Maḥmūd; he mounted horse and set out.

Coming in secret to Ayaz's pillow he put his finger to his lips.

He said to the attendants: "Take care you do not tell him about the king."

Maḥmūd the Conqueror seated himself and Ayaz sprang joyfully up.

His eyes were open and he sat gaily down—happy the slave that seated himself like a free man!

They said to him: "Thou wert beside thyself; thy body was left behind

and thy soul had departed.

Thou wert dizzy with the pain in thy eyes and stoodest uncertainly between body and soul.

And yet when the king sat down at thy pillow how was it that thou, who hadst just vomited, didst spring up from thy bed?

No one had told thee and thou wert not expecting him—how didst thou know about Maḥmūd?"

[*Ri.* 322]

He answered: "What need have I of hearing? Nor do I need to see.

My soul is independent of ear and eye, for with my soul I know him by his scent.

When I smelt his scent with my soul I became alive although I was dead."—

Hast thou not seen how the eyes of the prophet Jacob were bright because of a scent?

Thou shouldst make thyself eyes out of pain, but thou pinest away because of the pain in thy eyes.

When thou hast smelt the scent of knowledge, thou shinest over the horizons of both worlds.

[*Ro.* 253]

For that one mote in the light of knowledge is as bright as a hundred suns.

For the love of God is such that one mote of it is better than the two worlds.

A God loves thee so—canst thou then contain thyself for joy?¹²

The saints who looked upon this compass chose with a hundred souls the central point of pain for His sake.

They shed, their hearts filled with trouble, a thousand lives for one word from Him.'

(6) Story of Jirjīs¹³

"Three times, in fire and blood, the heathen caused the wheel to pass over Jirjīs.

His body was rent to pieces, as though it had been pulverised; and from his dust there sprang up a bed of tulips.

In the midst of all this pain and torment there came to him the Voice of God out of the unseen, saying:

"Whoever boasts of friendship with Us will not drink pure wine without lees.

It is always the reward of Our friends for the wheel to pass over their seven limbs."

They said to him: "O Jirjis, O pure one, hast thou any desire upon earth?"

He answered: "It is my desire now that once again under the wheel

[*Ri.* 323]

I may be broken to pieces in torment, so that again a Voice may come to me from God.

For He decreed all these pains for my soul in order that He may walk in friendship with me."—

Thou dost not appreciate His friends, for thou art a careless man in thy life.

Be one of His friends, or else be a friend of His friends.'

(7) Story of Joseph and Zulaikhā¹⁴

'One day Joseph the Pure was walking along when he saw Zulaikhā seated on the ground;

The world hidden from her eyes, but then she had averted her eyes from the world;

Afflicted with sickness and poverty, beside herself in a hundred different ways;

Every moment suffering more than a hundred griefs, more concerned about Joseph than Joseph himself;

[*Ro.* 254]

Sitting on the road as though hoping that she might receive some of the dust raised by his feet;

That perhaps some dust might rise from the road travelled by that king-like one.

When Joseph saw her he said: "O God, what wilt Thou with this blind and decrepit old woman?"

Why dost Thou not cause her to disappear seeing that she sought to bring disgrace on Thy prophet?"

Gabriel descended and said: "We shall not remove her,

For she has within her a whole world of love for him whom We love.

Since her love for thee is unceasing I too love her for thy sake.

Who told thee to seek the death of the rose in the garden and to wish for the destruction of the friends of Our friends?

Though for a lifetime I have driven her to despair, yet I will now make her young again for thee.

She has given thee her own precious soul; if I now bless her let her be to thee as thy soul.

[*Ri.* 324]

Since she is filled with tenderness for Our Joseph, who would think in

hatred of taking her life?

If she claims to love such a king as thou, her weeping eyes bear witness to her love."—

Since this lover has her witnesses with her her glory increases more and more every day.

If thou knowest how to sacrifice thy life thou hast some conception of the secret of lovers.

And if thou hast no idea of sacrificing life all thy talk is of no avail.

And if thou do not sacrifice thy life straightway the inexorable sword will take it from thee.'

(8) Story of Ibrāhīm the son of Adham in the desert¹⁵

'Thus said Ibrāhīm the son of Adham: "I was going gaily and happily on the Pilgrimage

When my eye fell upon Dhāt al-'Irq¹⁶ and I saw the dead bodies of seventy wearers of rags,

All bleeding from the ears and nose having died a painful and wretched death.

I hurried about amongst them for a while and came upon one half dead and yet still alive;

His soul had departed and there remained only a skeleton; his life was over and only a few moments remained.

I gently approached him and asked: 'What has happened? Tell me what has happened?'

He opened his mouth and said: 'O Ibrāhīm, fear the Friend, Who with His sword of glory

[Ro. 255]

Has cruelly and pitilessly smote down pilgrims like so many infidels from Rūm.

He makes war on pilgrims because He has a quarrel with their souls.

Know, O shaikh, that there were seventy of us who had resolved to visit the Ka'ba.

We met together before setting out and swore a vow of silence.

[Ri. 325]

We said that not for one moment during the journey would we think of aught but God;

That we should look at no other and that all as one we should merge ourselves, like the moth, in the candle.

Finally we set out upon the journey and at Dhāt al-'Irq we encountered Khidr.

Khidr the Pure greeted us and we returned his greeting.

We all rejoiced at seeing him and said to ourselves: "Now we are saved."

Having been welcomed by Khiḍr we promised ourselves a happy issue to this fortunate journey.

When this thought occurred to our minds it was followed by a voice from the unseen:

"Crooked men without food or sleep, you are full of pretensions and full of lies.

We accept neither your oath nor your word, for you were concerned with another than We.

Having swerved only a hair's breadth from Our covenant and become deluded in their perfidy by others,

You cannot look for peace and friendship until I have cruelly shed your blood."

Then He spilt the blood of all of these on the ground: He has no pity for the blood of His lovers.'

Ibrāhīm son of Adham asked the man: "How then wert thou saved from death?"

He answered: "It was said to me: 'Thou art not ready; thou shalt not yet feel Our sword since thou art imperfect.

When thou art ready, O man without hope or prospect, I will send thee to join them.' "

He spoke and his spirit departed from him; all trace was lost of him as of them.—

What weight has the blood of men upon this road, for here the mill turns upon blood?

Some stake their eyes upon this road and some their poor, afflicted souls.

Since thou hast ventured neither thy eyes nor thy soul, who art thou? Thou art neither the one nor the other.'

[*Ri.* 326]

(9) Story of Sh'uaib¹⁷

'Out of longing for God Shu'aib wept for ten years and then lived with closed eyes.

[*Ro.* 256]

God restored his sight and he shed tears of blood for another ten years.

Again his weeping eyes were darkened, and again God bestowed his sight upon him.

Again he wept for another ten years and again he was unable to see.

When he became blind and fell a-weeping, the Lord of the World sent him a revelation.

Saying: "If thou shed tears of blood for fear of hell, I have freed thee therefrom for ever.

And if it is because of paradise that thou art sad and weeping, I have granted thee paradise and the houris and Riḍwān."

Shu'aib then opened his mouth straightway and said: "O Thou Whose sway is eternal,

I weep thus bitterly out of longing for Thee, for I am quite free from concern for light or fire.

I have not a moment's thought for paradise nor do I lament on account of hell.

I must be near Thee for ever. I have told Thee the cause of my pain. Now do as Thou seest fit."

There came a Voice from the Zenith of knowledge, saying: "Since thou art weeping out of longing for Us,

Weep and continue to weep bitterly until there comes the time of the Vision."

Then said Shu'aib: "O Knower of Secrets, do not now restore my sight For until that Vision shall be I shall have no use for seeing."—

My son, since thou hast not this Vision, weep much for thou hast a life-time of labour before thee.

For the greater the jealousy in lovers' hearts the more the tears in their eyes.'

[*Ri.* 327]

(10) Story of the people of hell¹⁸

'There is a tradition that certain of the people of Islam will be refused mercy.

There will come a Voice saying: "Take them off now at once to hell, soaked in their blood.

On the brink of hell they will all at once ask God for a little respite, not much.

A Voice will be heard from God saying: "No length of time is long to Us.

We will give these people a thousand years respite, not because they deserve it, but as an act of grace."

There is a tradition that these distressful people will weep all this time day and night.

When these thousand years are at an end, they will ask God for another respite.

They will receive two more respites from God in order to shed tears of blood over their sufferings.

[Ro. 257]

During all these three thousand years and more they will weep and wallow in blood,

And no one will ever think to ask those wretched people why they are weeping so much.

A holy man has said: "A hundred miserable souls like mine are not equal to one tear of these people,

For to their hearts only has God given a pain to which there is no cure."—

So long as thou hast not the pain to which there is no cure, God will not give the command for thee to be cured.

One pain caused by Him is better for thee than a hundred lives; for pain caused by Him is better for thee than a multitude of cures.

Even though Bū 'Ubaida¹⁹ is thy surgeon, thy heart can be healed only by being wounded.

Fling thyself down upon thy face; perhaps the Friend will raise thee from the ground.

If thou do not raise thy head above His feet thou wilt lay hold of His heart-stealing lasso.'

[Ri. 328]

(11) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayaz²⁰

'The Sultan of the Faith, Maḥmūd the Victorious, one day asked his own Ayaz:

"Of what art thou most jealous in the whole world? I wish thee to give me a true answer."

Ayaz replied: "Everywhere I am jealous of the stone with which thou rubbest thy feet.

My heart complains out of jealousy of that stone of thine, for it rubs its cheek against the sole of thy foot.

If this good fortune were mine I should lay my head against the sole of thy foot all the time.

When my face was under the sole of thy foot, it would always be thy support,

And if Ayaz's face became thy support, he would set foot upon the seventh heaven."—

Since the Friend will have neither head nor turban, thou must win Him by guile and trickery.

Dost thou not know what trick Rustam found in a tamarisk-grove to play upon Isfandiyār?²¹

Inwardly do what thou canst; outwardly abandon food and sleep.

Advance by guile and trickery; go selflessly forward with loyalty and knowledge.

Perhaps by guile thou wilt find a way and will be for a moment alone with thy Friend.

If thou canst be with Him for a while thou wilt see thyself and wilt be free of grief.

Do not consider where He is and where thou; it is not strange that there should be separation.'

[*Ro.* 258]

(12) Story of Majnūn and Lailā²²

'One day Majnūn was seated in happy mood in front of an inn.

There was a plastered wall on which Lailā and Majnūn were depicted sitting together.

[*Ri.* 329]

A man cried out: "If I have slaved for a lifetime at last I have achieved my heart's desire."²³

I am dreaming perhaps to see Lailā and Majnūn sitting together.

Who has ever seen these two together? O God, who in all the world has beheld this glory?"

When Majnūn heard the man utter these words and perceived the painful state of his heart,

He uttered a cry and said: "This is no mistake, for Lailā has never been parted from Majnūn for a single moment.

The foundations of the union between us were firmly laid before the creation of the two worlds." '

Discourse XXI

The son said: 'With every piece of advice thou hast given me thou hast released me from a bond.

Thy advice has solved a hundred problems for me; it has changed my copper into *rukni*¹ gold.

Every one of thy words is of profit; they are at once useful and noble in the extreme.

But I conceived my passion for alchemy because through it one can win both the Faith and the world.

For when the world and the Faith shall have clasped hands together I shall have joined the Loved One for ever.

For without the aid of world and Faith I cannot have the support of the Friend.'

Father's reply

The father said: 'Thy brain is filled with vainglory, for this thought is remote from the truth.

Unless thou stake all good and evil thou art a lover in name only.

[Ro. 259]

If thou wouldst achieve perfection in love thou must be perpetually in three conditions:

First weeping, secondly burning, and thirdly bleeding. If thou come forth from these three seas,

Thy Beloved will admit thee behind the curtain, otherwise He will lay many a thorn in thy path.

And if thou do not understand these words, the following story will suffice to explain them.'

[Ri. 330]

(1) Story of the emir of Balkh and how his daughter fell in love²

'There was an emir of most lofty counsel who dwelt in the region of Balkh.

In justice and equity he was an emir of pure faith, whose grandfather had been a prince of that land.

In bravery and in force of arms he was a mighty man: this Ka'ba of the Faith was called Ka'b.

From his counsel came the bounteous glory of the sun and moon; from his generosity the learned derived their fame and bread.

Because of his justice the wolf and the sheep in his kingdom quickly concluded a wolf peace³ with one another.

From the fear he inspired the water of the raging seas was as silent as the fire inside the flint.

Because of his mercy, though there was a whole world of sins, they were erased from his mind in a moment.

Chilled with dread of him fire would become the colour of charcoal.

Such was his rank that all elevation sank into a well—what do I say? It lost its direction because of his rank.

Because of his patience the mountains stood still and the earth lay humbly at his feet.

Because of his wrath fire had withdrawn, with heavy heart and tear-filled eyes, into the heart of the flint.

From his bright splendour the sun of the heavens derived its light; with that splendour he illuminated the whole world.

His bounty put sea and mine to shame; the gems in their depths lost their lustre.

His benevolence caused the rose-petal to act the beggar, but modestly from behind a veil.

The musk of his gentleness breathed its scent over all the world and penetrated into the world to come.

The emir of pure faith had a son, famed throughout the world for his beauty.

[*Ri. 231*]

His face was like the sun, before which the moon was as the meanest slave.

The king had given him the name of Ḥārith: the moon was girded, like Orion, in his service.

He had also in his palace a daughter who was as dear and sweet to him as his life.

[*Ro. 240*]

The name of that silver-breasted one was Zain al-'Arab:⁴ she was a wondrous disturber and captivator of hearts.

Her beauty held sway over all the beauties of the world; all that was beautiful in the world was included in her beauty.

Compared with hers, all wisdom was but madness; she was proverbial for her beauty throughout the world.

Wherever her name was mentioned every atom of that place became a reflection of Joseph.

Whenever the new moon descried her from the heavens, it would bend its knees like a harp before her.

Were Ridwān to behold her forehead the Garden of Eden would lose all its splendour for him.

When the ends of her tresses fell to the ground they caused an agitation in the highest heavens.

Her eyes were two narcissi in almond-shaped vases; two negro children, like magicians, caught in a snare;

Each negro child with a bow with which to shoot arrows wherever there was a soul.

When she put the arrow of her coquetry to the bow-string she took aim at the hearts of all her lovers.

The sugar of her lips had a special taste, for mingled with the sugar was an elixir.

Her mouth was a casket of limpid pearls each more precious than the next.

When her thirty teeth displayed their lustre, every living soul offered itself for sacrifice.

Her ruby lips were a jewelled cup of which the wine was like the pure water of Kauthar.

Had the heavens seen the silvery globe of her face they would have rolled away headless and footless like a ball.

[*Ri.* 332]

To describe her beauty is impossible; it is vain presumption to think that I can describe it.

None had so quick a wit as she, for whatever she heard people say,

She would at once put it all into verse, joining it together like pearls on a string.

So sweet did her poetry sound it was as though she had put the taste of her lips into it.

She was always in her father's thoughts; he was filled with loving solicitude for her.

When the hour of death was approaching he sent for his son,

And confided his daughter to him, saying, "Pay heed. Take her from me and bestow every care upon her.

See to her welfare in every way that thou shouldst; make her life pleasant for her.

Illustrious men, mighty warriors and even kings have sought her of me in marriage.

I have given her to none. If thou canst find someone worthy of her, do as thou seest fit.

I call God as my witness: do not distress my soul."

[*Ro.* 261]

The father spoke words of every kind to his son and the son agreed to all that he had said.

In the end his sweet soul was parted from him. I do not know why he came or why he went.

The heavens were turned upside down in order to bury his head and feet beneath the earth.

God's bow is in no man's hand. No one knows anything of all this coming and going.

Who knows how long he has to live? Why did he that came then have to go?

When the father had departed to the Divine Palace, his son sat in the royal audience-chamber.

He shone in the world through his justice and equity; the world received from him the breath of Nūshīrvān.

He gave dirhems to the peasantry and army; to many a commander he gave drum and banner.

[*Ri.* 333]

He drove out foolish thoughts from many a brain; he overthrew many an oppressor.

In kindness, luxury and glory he cherished his sister like his own soul.

Now hear what trick the revolving compass played upon her.

Ḥārith had a peerless slave who was the keeper of his treasury.

The name of that moon-like one was Bektash; I do not know if there was anyone his equal.

In beauty he was one of the wonders of the world; what a rare feeling to be sick with love for him!

He was proverbial for the greatness of his beauty: Death lay in wait for those who sought his love.

If he blushed for shame the rose would be caught in the mud.

When his face was reflected upon them the pictures on the wall came into motion.

When the Hindu host of his hair rode forth in anger they formed themselves into the negro troops of his curls.

With so many mighty men enslaved by his hair he had so much wealth laid in store.

His eyebrows were best when knitted; they were like a bow that had just been strung.

His eyes were a tempting windfall, for there was cash in them besides almonds.⁵

The ranks of his eyelashes broke the ranks of the foe with the shots of two rows of archers.

His mouth was like a pierced ruby in which were concealed thirty unpierced pearls.

Aye, and if the ruby of his mouth was pierced, it was only with the diamond of his tongue.

His lips commanded eternal life because it was from them that the water of Khiḍr received its soul.

Of his teeth it could be said that he had thirty-two verses in one *mim*.⁶
[Ro. 262]

He was like Joseph in his beauty—what canst thou say of the dimple in his chin?

[Ri. 334]

How long shall I be lost in admiration of his dimple? When I come to his dimple, I am silent.

In front of the palace stood a splendid garden, within its confines an earthly paradise.

All night long the nightingale was kept awake by its love; it sang to the rose of the thorns upon its path.

The rose with a hundred amorous gestures burst into sweet laughter.

Like a blood-covered babe the red rose emerged from its green swaddling-band.

The east wind rushed in like Zulaikhā and the rose's skirt was rent like Joseph's.⁷

Like a wind Khiḍr had passed across the desert and after Khiḍr had passed the desert had turned green.

The meteor and the lightning had sharpened their lances; with their rain the clouds had loosened a hundred bridles.

The green fields cupped their hands: they were filled with pearls from the rain.

The violet bowed its head in obeisance but it was kissing its own feet.

The Judas tree, soaked in blood, had come to take its own life.

The narcissus, yellow cup in hand, had drunk the sweet milk of the rain.

The tulip's head was bowed and its crown was touching its waist.

A thousand Josephs had appeared out of the garden, and the smell of the shirt had reached Canaan.⁸

The birds filled the meadows with their clamour; the plain was in a turmoil from their clamour.

At dawn the musky wind made ripples on the water like the marks of a file.

It was like Afrāsiyāb discovering the Sea of Mail,⁹ for out of the spring breezes the water had fashioned a coat of mail.¹⁰

From every direction there flowed another Kauthar, whereof the slightest drop was the water of Khiḍr.

In front of the garden an arch rose up to Saturn; beneath the portico was set Ḥārith's throne.

[Ri. 335]

King Hārith, like the auspicious sun, was seated Solomon-like in the highest place.

Hand on belt like Orion the slaves stood in attendance like so many graceful cypress-trees.

Drawn up in ranks were his indomitable Turks each with hand on breast in obeisance.

His proud and sage courtiers bent their eyes downwards in awe of his majesty.

The nobles of all the world were baseborn in his sight; the order of the universe was due to his lofty counsel.

Strife was asleep because his fortune was awake; fire wept tears out of fear of his wrath.

[Ro. 263]

Jupiter-like he was as vengeful as Saturn, as handsome as the Moon, as gifted as Mercury and as lofty as the Sun.

The daughter of Ka'b came out on the rooftop; she was struck with the splendour of that banquet.

Having gazed for a while in every direction she espied in the end the face of that moon-like one.

She saw the face and cheeks of Bektash, his shape like a cypress clad in a cloak;

A world of comeliness devoted to his face, all beauty bestowed on him as on Joseph.

As cupbearer he stood before the king, his long hair falling to his feet.

From drink his face was like a pomegranate flower; his eyelashes were like thorns in the eyes of his lovers.

Sugar flowed from that sweet fountain; sweat dripped from the Moon on to the Pleiades.¹¹

Now, gay with wine, he filled the cup; now he played sweetly upon the rebeck.

Now he raised his voice like a nightingale and now he poured out again from the pitcher.

Seeing his face so fair Ka'b's daughter gave her heart to every hair on his head.

At once from love a flame of fire rose up in her and carried away all that she had.

[Ri. 336]

That fire left such a mark on her soul that her body lost consciousness.

Her heart was enamoured and her soul too condemned; from head to foot her being ceased to be.

From her narcissus-like eyes blood flowed as from a cloud; many a flood poured out from them in short space of time.

So much was she uprooted by her love for him that it was as though she were crucified.

With a single glance she had fallen into his snare; sleep deserted her by night and peace by day.

She that gave help to others became herself so helpless that she did not know her head from her feet.

All night she moaned and shed tears of blood; she burned all the time like a candle.

From the flames which attacked her soul she fell unconscious, as though drunk with wine.

In short, from pain and grief that moon-like one was sick for a whole year.

Hārith sent for a physician but it was of no avail, for that idol suffered from an ill without a cure.

How could such an ill be cured? For the heart can be healed only by the sweetheart.

Behind the curtain the girl had a nurse who was endowed with a great store of cunning.

With a hundred wiles she questioned that sun-like one, saying, "What ails thee, daughter? Tell me the truth."

That moon-like one would admit nothing at first, but then she came and said:

[*Ro.* 264]

"I saw Bektash on such-and-such a day; his hair and face enflamed my soul and illuminated my heart.

Gay with wine he held a rebeck to his breast; because of him I held my hand to my head like a rebeck.

When he struck up the melody of 'Verdure' his song caused the birds to soar up in the air.¹³

When the melody of 'Rose Garden' was added to it the very roses were intoxicated by the sound.

With a stroke of the plectrum in the mode he chose he made the 'rebel' 'loyal'.¹³

Though the rebel is never loyal in the world yet on his scale treble was at peace with bass.

[*Ri.* 337]

Since my heart has become a rebel what shall I do? For I shall never attain to this player of the scale.

Now I am the most distracted creature in the world for I have joined the company of all lovers.¹⁴

When I heard that proud one sing I shed behind the curtain a whole river of tears.

So much was I overwhelmed by my love for him that a hundred years

of grief passed over me.

So much did his hair distract me that the kingdom of my composure came to an end.

So tightly did his ringlets encircle me that my heart bled until like my liver it dried up.

I am so sick and distraught because I know that I do not know his worth.

No one is as beautiful as Bektash; it is impossible for anyone to be more beautiful than he.

When one can speak of that cypress tree why must one speak of any other?

His chin is like a silver ball, the ringlets of his hair like a black polo-stick.¹⁵

Since his brow is like a silvery polo ground why should I not make a polo-stick out of his hair?

On that arena with that giddy polo-stick I shall not carry off a ball from his chin.

If he turns his hair into a polo-stick he will turn my head into a rolling ball.

If his face were to shine with all its brightness every mote would become like a hundred fragments of the moon.

When the crescent of his cheek forms a halo¹⁶ it causes the new moon to fall into lamentation.

When his heart-ravishing locks curl into ringlets a hundred hearts are caught in each of them.

The pupils of his eyes have chosen a dark place as a sanctuary and remained at their devotions in it.

His blood-drawing eyes are two sorcerers, and his hair practises its magic in the whole world.

When the arrow of his amorous glance has done its work the spear and the javelin return to their holders.

[Ro. 265]

Those thirty teeth of his are a lance and his lips smile at my blood that it has spilled.

[Ri. 338]

Silver looked on that shell¹⁷ and that precious pearl¹⁸ within; it looked with mouth agape unable to praise.

His mouth is like a narrow pistachio, in which his teeth are like so many dice.

If he smiles like the dawning day, bamboo pith takes on the nature of bone.¹⁹

His lips have more than a hundred thousand slaves; for there is more immortality in them than in the Water of Life.

The fresh down on his cheeks is like *muḥaqqaq* writing; it is altogether different from *naskh*.²⁰

His lips have the world under their seal; his thirty stars have the heavens under their saddle.

Because of his apple,²¹ because of his pine-like form, I have dropped pomegranate seeds²² upon a quince.²³

Since I cannot be freed from this slender cypress my face has become like a quince and there is no hope of recovery.

Yearning for his arrow-like shape strings me like a bow.

Now, O nurse, arise and go; mediate between these two sweethearts.

Go and confide this tale to him; lay the foundations of love between these two lovers.

Reveal this secret to him, and if he be angry I will welcome his anger with heart and soul.

And now bring us two together in such a way that no man or woman may know of it."

So she spoke abandoning her good name; she wrote a letter with the blood of her heart:

"O thou who art absent and yet present, where art thou? Why art thou withheld from my eyes?

My eyes receive their light only from thee; my heart receives its knowledge only from thee.

Come and make my eyes and heart thy guests, or else bring a sword and take my life.

[*Ri.* 339]

Of all the wealth of this world I am left with nothing but half a life.

Why should I not give this half life to thee? For without thee I have no need for a hundred lives.

Thou hast stolen my heart, and if I had a thousand I should have nothing to do but scatter them in front of thee.

Not for one moment can I forsake thee, for never will I take back my heart from my beloved.

I will store in my heart the pain of my love for thee; I will exchange my belief for idolatrous worship of thy hair.

Without thy face I have neither heart nor faith; why dost thou keep me in such confusion?

Without thy face my face is like a dinar;²⁴ for love of thy face my face is turned to the wall.

I have seen thee and have seen that none is thy peer; I have seen no cypress-shaped one equal to thee.

[*Ro.* 266]

If thou wilt come to me I shall be saved, if not I shall run in every direction,

Holding a lamp with every finger, seeking thee in every field and garden.

If thou appear before me like a candle, all will be well; otherwise consider me to have been extinguished like a lamp."

She wrote this letter and then drew a picture of her moon-like self.

She gave it to the nurse who set off and made her way to that tender moon-faced one.

When he saw the picture and read the verses he marvelled at her talent as a poet and as a painter.

In a moment his heart was lost, and when love came his heart bled with longing.

The crocodile of love overwhelmed him and made his lap and skirt into a sea of blood.

Without her face he looked at the world as though there were neither heaven nor earth.

He was as agitated as a headless and footless ball, putting hat on foot and shoe on head.

[*Ri.* 340]

He said to the nurse: "Arise, O thou of pleasant speech, go to that idol and say to her from me:

'I have no eyes to see thy face; I have no patience to rest without thee.

What shall I do now without thee? For I cannot endure so much pain without thee.

Like thy tresses I burst through the veil when I gave my love to thy face.

Thy tresses have disturbed me thus because my whole life has become dependent on them.

Without my seeing thee thou hast entered my soul; my heart is gone and thou hast entered my blood.

Since thou hast concealed thyself in my soul why then dost thou thirst after my life's blood?

Do not trick me like the dawn, O moon behind a cloud; do not, like the sun, draw thy sword in pride.

If thou wilt brighten my eyes with the sight of thee, I will die a hundred deaths for thee.

I am dying now, O thou who art my life. Thou canst save me if thou wilt, otherwise do as thou seest fit.' "

The nurse went back to that moon-like one and told of the slave's love.

"He is even more in love", she said, "than thou; fire itself is incapable of his ardour.

If thy heart knew the extent of his love then would it learn of the true pain of love."

The girl's heart rejoiced exceedingly; tears of joy flowed down her cheeks.

That heart-illuminating one could do nothing, night and day, but

compose verses and *ghazals*.²⁵

The poems came easily and she would send them to Ḥārith; so she became a skilful poet.

[Ro. 267]

The slave with every poem he read became more enamoured and more amazed.

When some time had passed that enflamer of hearts went out into a vestibule.

[Ri. 341]

Bekdash caught sight of her and recognised her, for he had been in love for a lifetime with the picture of her face.

He seized her skirt. She was angry, tore herself loose and said:

"Ill-mannered one, what impudence is this? Thou art a fox—how canst thou take the place of a lion?"

No man dares approach me—who art thou that thou shouldst seize my skirt?"

The slave replied: "I am the dust in thy street. Thou hidest thy face from me—

Why then didst thou send me poems day and night and steal my heart with that heart-enflaming picture?

Having first driven me mad why dost thou treat me as a stranger?"

That silver-breasted one answered: "Thou knowest nothing of this mystery.

Something has happened within my bosom and it was brought about by thee.

Not a hundred slaves would have been worthy of doing this, and yet I have granted it to thee. What more wouldst thou have?

Is this not enough for thee that thou hast been the medium?

Thou has laid a foundation of shame upon it; thou has fallen short of it because of thy lust."

So she spoke and left him, his heart a hundred times more distracted.

I have read the words of Bū Sa'id of Mihna,²⁶ who says: "I came thither And enquired about the daughter of Ka'b whether she was a mystic or an amorous woman."

He goes on: "It became clear to me that the poetry she composed

Did not spring lightly from burning love of an earthly lover.

That poetry had no concern with mortal man; she lived only for God.

[Ri. 342]

Hers was perfect spirituality; the slave that crossed her path was but a medium."

In short that lovesick girl, impelled by her passion, sadly composed her poems day and night.

One day she was walking alone in the meadows singing these sweet verses:

“Follow thy path, night wind; tell that Yaghma Turk of me.”²⁷

Say to him: ‘Thou hast taken away my sleep by the thirst thou hast caused me; thou hast taken my water and drunk my blood.’ ”

Now Hārith was on the far side of the meadow, and at once these words reached his ears.

He boiled with anger and shouted to her: “What art thou saying, thou lost creature?”

The enamoured maiden swept the ground in front of her; she altered those verses and recited as follows:

“Follow thy path, night wind; tell that ruddy-complexioned water-carrier of me.

Say to him: ‘Thou hast taken away my sleep by the thirst thou hast caused me; thou hast taken my water and drunk my blood.’ ”

There was in fact a ruddy-faced water-carrier who used to bring her a pitcher of water.

And when that moon-like lady substituted “ruddy-complexioned water-carrier” for “Yaghma Turk”

She caused her brother to feel suspicion and to look upon her with distrust.

When a month had passed by, there came an army to make war on Hārith;

An army whose numbers were beyond enumeration, no more to be calculated than the revolution of the heavens;

An army billowing with swords and breast-plates, lighting up the world with the glitter of swords and breast-plates.

It charged down from the mountains and hilltops in such a manner that the Earth-Ox²⁸ became like a donkey stuck to the ice.

On the other side Hārith issued forth from the gates at the head of his army,

Every man as youthful as his own fortune, his parasol and helmet as lofty as his counsel.

Victory accompanied him on the one side ring in ear, Conquest and Triumph on the other neck and neck.

The armies clashed together and the slaughter began.

A cloud of dust rose up over the whole plain; a tumult rose up to the green cupola.

The sound of the drums deafened the celestial sphere; the earth like the heavens was turned upside down.

The earth was a tulip bed from the enemy’s blood; the air was a shower of dew from the raining of arrows.

[*Ri.* 343]

It was as though the world had burst its dykes and corpses had been piled up to stop the breach.

Death had sharpened its claws to attack men's lives; and Destiny had sharpened its teeth to vent its spite.

There were a hundred signs of the Day of Judgment; demons arose out of that tumult.

Hārith appeared before those ranks leading a whole world of troops.

Putting his men in battle-array he advanced like a lion and attacked the enemy.

The whirling heavens with their countless stars were rent to pieces by the point of his spear.

[*Ro.* 269]

When his sword came down upon the heads of the foe it was a miracle whereby the head of strife was bowed down until Judgment Day.

When his sword bathed the enemy, like the rose, in blood, there sprang from it the rose of victory.

When his arrow sped towards the blue circle it passed through the eye of Jesus' needle.²⁹

Elsewhere the moon-faced Bektash struck in every direction with his two-handed sword.

Finally misfortune had its way and his head was severely wounded with a sword-blow.

That virtuous one was almost captured by the enemy.

Now the maiden was in those ranks with covered face, a weapon in her hand and mounted on horseback.

She rose up in front of those ranks like a mountain, striking all hearts with awe.

None knew who that silver-breasted one was. She opened her mouth and said: "Why this sloth?"

I am that king whose queen is the firmament: the moon and sun are pawns in attendance on me.

If I gallop my horse on to the revolving chessboard, I shall move two rooks upon it like a valorous man.

Whoever rebels against me I shall cast him under the feet of elephants; I shall checkmate him.³⁰

[*Ri.* 344]

If I draw my trenchant sword I shall cut out the liver of a roaring lion.

When my fire-belching blade flashes forth, for fear of it the bile of fire turns to water.

When I twist in my hand my snake-like javelin, there is no warrior that I hold of any account.

Though an anvil were to encounter my lance, the force of my thrust would shiver it to pieces.

An anvil could not stand up to my thrust; there would be nothing left of it but a mustard-seed.

When the bird of my arrow flies up from the bow-string it will tear out the entrails of the bird of the firmament.

When I uncoil the lasso at my saddle-bow I shall drag the enemy face downward in the dust like the wind.

I shall gallop my Rakhsh,³¹ I shall open the door of decision, for in battle I am a Rustam, being of the race of Rustam."

So she spoke and like a fierce man slew ten of the enemy.

Then she went up to Bektash, sword in hand, lifted him up and carried him back to the ranks.

Having laid him down she disappeared without anyone's having recognised her.

And when that idol-faced one had disappeared into some corner, the hostile army flowed forward like a sea.

It wanted but little and neither town would have remained nor inhabitants within it,

When help appeared for Hārith, a great host from the king of Bukhārā.

[*Ro.* 270]

Troops poured in from mountain and plain in such numbers that the very heavens were giddy with their multitude.

The help arrived in time and Hārith and his army gained the victory.

The host of the enemy king was put to flight; their dead abandoned where they lay.

When the king re-entered the town, happy and victorious, he sought the agile horseman of that day.

But none could give any news of him. Everyone said: "He has vanished like a peri."

[*Ri.* 345]

At last came the negro Night with half a moon upon his lips.

All night the disc of the moon, like a round cake of soap, produced a froth of light.

With that soap, lathered with tears of blood, that world-enflamer washed her hands of her life.

When crow-like night came down, because of her beloved the maiden's heart was like a bird in a cage.

So fiercely did her heart burn for Bektash's wound that in a single instant her soul too was consumed.

Not for a moment could she sleep or rest because of the wound in her beloved's head.

How could her heart be at rest? She wrote a letter with tears of blood.

These were the verses of that jessamine-scented one: "Hear the tale of a speaking mute.

The head that deserves a royal crown—what business has an arrowhead in that head?

The head of thy enemy—ill befall him!—may he never raise it except on the gallows!

The head that is not ennobled with thy being is doomed to be bowed in shame—these are no idle words.

The head that does not lay itself in the dust of thy doorway—I swear by my soul and by my head that it will come to nought.

If a jealous man rise against him, strike off his head as thou wouldst a serpent's—it is what he deserves.

And if a bold enemy rear his head, cut it off and put it under his arm.

Whoever does not wish thee well let him be headless for the fault is from his head.

If thy enemy does not bow his head, wishing to oppose thee, it is because he has in mind to leave his head there.

[*Ri.* 346]

If he does not lower his head before thee, it is because he cares not one whit for his head.

From thy fortunate head the crown derives its splendour, nay, its fortune confers nobility on every head.

The sky with its down-turned head holds its head high because at every moment it again bows it low.

If my headache has given thee a headache, may my head be cut off to cure thy head!

Before thy head I have lain mine on the ground; may a hundred such heads be sacrificed for such a head!

[*Ro.* 271]

Whoever, hurt by defeat, nurses his grudge, if he renews his attack he succumbs to thy wrath.

Whoever tastes fruit from the tree of pleasure, if he drinks wine without thinking of thee he will drink his life's blood.

Whoever in his ignorance boasts of wisdom, if he strikes gold other than in thy name strikes it ill.

Whoever decides to make the Pilgrimage, if he makes it without thy command commits a sin.

What has befallen thee that thou art bathed in blood? None is more afflicted by thy pain than I.

I burn all night like a candle, and when the night is over the day brings death also.

From love I smile all the time like a candle and make a dyke out of my eyes.

Since the candle lives only on love, it smiles in the midst of tears and fire.

If at night I had hope of seeing the day it might be that I would burn less.

And yet the candle, though it has no hope of seeing the day, continues to burn the whole time.

Because of this fire that has reached my soul a great storm of rain has reached my eyelashes.

Strange that a fire that spreads such heat should also produce such floods of water!

What wouldst thou of me burning as I am? There is no time, night or day, when I am not burning.

[Ri. 347]

Do not make me welter in dust and blood; do not cause me to revolve in giddiness like the heavens.

Since thou knowest that I am dizzy in my head, why dost thou make me reel on my feet?

Thou knowest that I am drunk with thee, that I have fallen thus low on thy account.

Since I drink blood, why should I not shed it? Why should I welter in aught but blood?

So much am I beside myself for love of thee that I can find my way neither forwards nor backwards.

My heart is sore with pain; I have locked myself in the House of Sorrows.³²

How long wilt thou cruelly burn me limb by limb? How long wilt thou burn me like rue-seeds upon the fire?³³

Were it not for hope of union with thee, there would be left of me neither ashes nor smoke.

To live by myself is desecration; I can live only with the scent of union with thee.

My heart cannot endure the word 'separation', for it can hardly support the joy of union with my beloved.

Like all who have lost their peace of mind, I have told thee only a thousandth part of the pain I suffer.

I will tell thee more if I can find a way; otherwise I will carry this secret in my soul."

[Ro. 272]

The nurse set off with this letter; she delivered the message exactly, neither more nor less.

Bekdash's head, covered as it was with wounds, found balm and comfort in this letter.

A deluge of blood flowed from his eyes; he confided many a loving message to the messenger,

Saying, "My love, how long wilt thou leave me alone? Art thou unwilling to enquire after thy sick friend?

Come, my beloved, like a kind friend, and sit for a while at the pillow

of a man without friends.

If today I have a wound on my head, I have a thousand on my soul, O enflamer of hearts.

[*Ri.* 348]

From longing for thee my shirt has turned into a shroud." So he spoke and swooned away.

Some days passed and kind Bektash recovered from his wounds.

One day Rūdakī³⁴ was walking along the road when he came upon the heart-enflaming maiden seated by the wayside.

Though he composed verses like molten gold, yet the maiden composed much better ones.

That day the master composed many verses which the maiden capped with her own.

Rūdakī marvelled at the delicacy of her talent.

Having thus learnt of that jessamine-breasted one's love he set out upon his way.

Possessed of that secret he journeyed to the town of Bukhārā,

Where he hurried to do obeisance to the king who had come to Ḥārith's aid.

Ḥārith had now come to that lofty king to offer his thanks.

That day there was a royal banquet—what do I say?—there was a heart-delighting paradise.

The king asked Rūdakī for some poetry and the master rose and opened his mouth.

Having memorised the verses of Ka'b's daughter he recited them all. The assembly was greatly moved.

The king said: "Tell me who composed this? These words are like pearls. Who was it who pierced them?"

How should Rūdakī be aware of Ḥārith? He was drunk with verse and with wine also.

In his drunkenness he opened his mouth and said: "O king, these are the verses of Ka'b's daughter.

She is madly in love with a slave; she is caught in her love like a bird in a snare.

She neither eats nor sleeps, she does nothing but compose verses and *ghazals*.

Having composed a hundred verses filled with meaning she sends them to him in secret.

[*Ro.* 273]

[*Ri.* 349]

Were not her love like fire her poetry would not be so beautiful."

When Ḥārith heard these words he was thunderstruck but he pretended to be drunk.

Having returned to his own town he kept this secret from his sister.
 Though his heart boiled in anguish yet he concealed his feelings,
 Until he should detect her committing a crime for which he would shed
 her blood.

Now all the verses which that moon-like one had sent from time to time
 to Bektash

He had placed, reverently, in a casket and fastened the lid so that it
 might not be opened.

The jessamine-breasted Bektash had a friend who thought that it was a
 jewel casket.

He opened the lid and read the verses; then he took them to Hārith
 and read them to him.

Hārith's heart was filled with fire and he decided to put his sister to
 death.³⁵

First he had Bektash cast into chains and thrown into a well.

Then he ordered a bath to be heated for that silver-limbed one,

And commanded a surgeon to open the veins in her wrists and not to
 close them again.

Then he had her placed in the bath and all the means of entry closed
 with bricks and mortar.

That graceful cypress gave out many cries but her cries were of no
 avail.

Who can tell how she died? The hearts of a whole world of people bled
 for her.

Who ever heard such a tale? Who ever suffered such a fate as hers?

Who ever in all the world endured even for a single day such affliction,
 such pain, such anguish?

If thou art a lover, come that thou mayst see pain, that thou mayst see
 the path of all true lovers.

Flames arose around that moon-like one but subsided at once.

[*Ri.* 350]

One flame rose from that ill-omened bath, another from her flame-
 like verse;

One from the attributes of youth, another from the great deluge of
 blood;

One from the heat of love and jealousy, another from shame and be-
 wilderment.

One from sickness and debility, another from ecstasy and intoxication.

Who could extinguish such a fire, even with a hundred jets of water?
 Who could endure it?

That moon-like one dipped her finger in blood and wrote many verses.

With her blood she wrote many verses on the walls, writing them in the
 anguish of her heart.

[*Ro.* 274]

When she had covered all the walls and was left with very little blood,
Having filled the walls with verses she collapsed like a piece of the wall.
In the midst of blood, love, fire and tears her gentle soul departed with
a hundred sorrows.

When the bath was opened the next day, how shall I say they found that
enflamer of hearts?

From head to foot she was like a stalk of saffron and yet soaked from
head to foot with blood.

They took her and purified her with water; they laid her bleeding heart
beneath the earth.

They looked on the walls of the bath and read these heart-rending
lines:

"My loved one, without thee my eyes are like two fountains; my whole
face is dyed with my heart's blood.

Thou hast abandoned me to the flood that pours through my eye-
lashes; nay, thou hast taken all water from me.

Thou hast stolen my heart and sittest at thy ease therein, nay, it is fire
in which thou sittest.

[*Ri.* 351]

Having entered my heart thou wilt never leave it; nay, thou wilt never
immerse thyself in blood.

Having caused two streams to flow from my eyes, thou hast provided a
wash for my hair in the bath.

I am like a fish in the pan—wilt thou not come to me in this bath?

Such was the decree of the Divine Court touching my love, that it
should be thrust into hell while still alive,

In order that it might record its secrets in the midst of flames and fire.

How shouldst thou know how such a tale should be written; it can be
written only in blood.

Since I am in hell because of that paradisiacal one I am surrounded by
paradise here below.

Since God has made hell my lot my tale has become the paradise of
lovers.

The world of love has three roads: fire, tears and blood.

Now I am consumed with fire: sometimes I spill blood and sometimes
I shed tears.

I could wish to burn my soul with fire, but since thou art in it I cannot
burn it.

With my tears I wash the feet of my beloved; with my blood I wash
my hands of my life.

With this fire that flares up out of my soul I burn all that have not been
consumed in fire.

With these tears upon my face I wash all that have unwashed faces.

With this blood, if the way is open to me, I will provide the rouge for all lovers.

[*Ro.* 275]

With this fire in which I am burnt I will show the seven hells how to burn.

With these tears, which are a torrent of blood, I will teach the rain how to rain.

With this blood, which is like a sea, I will teach the dawn how to paint its face red.

[*Ri.* 352]

With this fire I have so wrought with this world that hell itself might ask me for a flame.²⁶

With these tears I have turned the whole of both worlds until Judgment Day into so much mud beneath the water.

With this blood I have so blocked the path of the celestial sphere that its millstone will turn only in blood.

Except the image of my heart-enflaming dream I burn all images in this fire.

Because of the pain that my beloved suffered I will flood the earth with my tears.

Because my beloved likes to drink my blood it is well if the whole world is filled with my blood.

Thou hast drunk all the blood of my soul—good health, O my beloved!

And now amidst fire and tears and blood I go with a sore heart out of this world.

Without thee my life has come to an end. I go—mayst thou remain for ever!"

When she had written all this with her blood, the divine order came and her soul rose up out of its feeble frame.

Alas! nay, a hundred thousand times alas for the cruel death of that crown of horsemen!

In the end Bektash found an opportunity to clamber up out of the well.

He went off by stealth and at dawn cut off Hārith's head, then setting out

He came to the maiden's tomb. Opening his garment he seized a dagger and plunged it in his heart.

He departed from this transitory world; he forsook this prison and these heavy chains.

He could not endure to live without his peerless beloved; he went to join her—and so my tale is ended.'

Discourse XXII

The son said: 'O father, what is this alchemy without which I cannot live?

Explain it to me that I may know, and perhaps my soul may be at rest.'

[*Ri.* 353]
Father's reply

The father related to him the following tale about Plato the Greek:

[*Ro.* 276]
(1) Story of Plato and Alexander¹

'Plato, that teacher of all the world, had in the first place made it his task

To invent the means of making gold and so to turn copper into gold ingots and to manufacture the elixir.

For fifty years he remained hidden in a corner and with eggshells and human hair

He produced such an elixir and produced it so well that with a little alchemy he could manufacture a great quantity of gold.

When it had become so easy for him to produce gold, gold and dust became equal in value to him.

He said to himself one day: "Consider, O heart, how thou mightest produce an elixir of thy own essence.

Since by thy efforts eggshells and hair have been turned into a heart-delighting elixir,

If thou didst produce one of thine own essence, that elixir would be greater than a whole world.

One can do this with eggshells, but can one obtain the elixir of the soul?

Thy soul is not inferior to an eggshell; a hair of thy head is not superior to thy spirit.

For fifty years thou hast worked on this elixir, sleeping neither day nor night and scheming always.

Now, if thou be wise, O alchemist, stake both worlds upon the discovery of this new elixir."

His decision taken he withdrew for a thousand years from the people of the world.

From his own essence he produced an elixir such that both worlds were illuminated with its light.

All between the Moon and the Fish were blotted out for him; divine mysteries were revealed to him.

[*Ri.* 354]

For a thousand years he concerned himself with these mysteries; his heart was absorbed in the pain of his toil.

In the winter he had an ointment with which he rubbed himself from head to foot,

And feather-like hair would grow upon his limbs to protect his body from the cold.

He had prepared another ointment which he rubbed upon himself in summer,

And then that hair would moult from his body and the heat of the summer would not incommode him.

He had concocted yet another medicine which he would take once every six years.

Having taken that medicine he would need no nourishment whatsoever for six years.

His nature remained always in equilibrium; there was never any change in his humours.²

[*Ro.* 277]

Though he was the most excellent man on the face of the earth, such was his food and clothing for a thousand years.

One day Aristotle came to visit him, accompanied by Alexander.

Plato sat, grief-stricken, in a terrible cave surrounded on six sides by mountains.

There was a tree with a spring beneath it; and there Plato sat, his breast filled with anguish.

Alexander and Aristotle sat waiting for a long time, but the wise sage breathed not a word.

At last Alexander said: "Speak some word of wisdom, for we have come hither to hear thee."

That master of all time replied: "In the end our only capital is silence.

And since silence is our everlasting capital, take on that everlasting colour that thou too mayst remain."

Said Alexander: "If thou wouldst have food I will provide it that thy body may be strengthened."

[*Ri.* 355]

Thus answered that man of men: "O Khusrau, do not turn my body into a privy.

Do not eat, for it is not worth while to eat in order to do that; it is not worth while for thee in order to go to the privy.

If I turn my belly into a cesspit, I shall be left with neither knowledge nor intelligence."

Said Alexander: "Peerless man, sleep and enjoy some rest for a while."

That wise sage answered: "There is so much sleep ahead of me

That none can say how it will be or for how long. My waking life I have only now.

Since my life is renewed every instant it is not right that I should sleep even for a little while."

His heart distressed with this conversation he went up into a mountain and fled away from them.

Alexander and Aristotle wept bitterly from pain and anguish.—

Thou hast heard how it fared with Plato and how he was guided by wisdom.

If thou know nothing of world-illuminating alchemy, learn from Plato.

Why prepare the alchemy of silver and gold with eggshells and hair?

Turn thy body into a heart and thy heart into pain, for it is thus that true men practise alchemy.'

(2) Story of the holy man and Bū 'Alī Ṭūsī³

'A holy man, both wise and good, related about Bū 'Alī Ṭūsī

[Ro. 278]

That he said to a man clad in a cloak: "Go, forsake thy cloak and seek annihilation

For at this moment thou art in the height of danger, being all cloak from head to foot.

Upon the Road thou art all back; become all face; become all face, all eyes.

Become at once all eyes, all heart;⁴ let thy heart be all pain in thy works.

When from pain thou hast become pain itself, thou shalt become all cure and thou shalt be a man.

[Ri. 356]

If thou wouldst know what pain is, know, O life, that death is facing thee.

But know also that true pain is something that no one has ever experienced in either world.'"

(3) Story of the madman who was asked 'What is pain?'⁵

'Someone asked a madman: "What is pain when thou hast it?"

He answered: "Pain is the feeling of a man who has had his hand cut off and wants it back.

Or it is the feeling of a man who has thirsted for ten days and needs water above all else.

It is thus that a man must need God so that the mysteries may be revealed to him."—

That is pain, O life, when thou needst what thou dost not know of.

Thou dost not know of it and yet thou wishest for it always. I do not know what kind of occupation this is.

Whatever else thou hast is nothing. Seeking now one thing now another leads only to perplexity.'

(4) Story of the child that went to the market with his mother and got lost.⁶

'A woman brought a child to the market; he lost his mother and began to cry bitterly.

Now from grief he scattered dust upon his head, now he shed tears of blood.

The people seeing him covered with dust and blood were in fear for his life.

[Ro. 279]

[Ri. 357]

They said to him: "What is thy mother's name? Tell us." He answered: "I do not know what it is."

They said: "Thou seekest thy mother so frantically. Tell us, where is thy house?"

The distracted child answered: "I know about neither house nor place."

They said to him: "Tell us the name of the quarter that thou mayst be saved from this misery."

He answered: "My soul is filled with pain for I do not know the quarter."

They said: "Then what shall we do with thee? For thou art distressed and we are distressed for thee."

He answered: "I am lost and astray: I know nothing about my mother or her name.

I do not know the quarter or the house; I know only of my mother.

I am lonely and deserted and I know only that I want my mother here.

I know that my soul is bleeding because I want my mother—I know nothing else.”—

If thou become all pain from head to foot, thou wilt be fit for the sanctuary of union.

And how shouldst thou not be fit since thou art the ultimate object of desire in both worlds?

But thou art not thou, thou art the reflection of Him; therefore it is that thou art always fair and beautiful.

Though thou mayst be fair, regard only Him as fair. Since thou art but a reflection regard the beauty as His.

It was He that gave thee this double sight: thou are not beautiful, it is His nature that is beautiful.

Do not look at thyself and this body and soul: look at His nature, not at thyself.

Both worlds are full of Him. Look well! If thou have eyes, thou shalt see not thyself, but Him.’

(5) Story of Joseph and his looking in the mirror?

‘Joseph looked in the mirror and much admired his moon-like face.

But that unworthy mirror thought that he was admiring it. O what foolishness!

[*Ri. 358*]

For though Joseph had good reason for admiration, the mirror was a fit object for pity.

If the beloved did not look at the mirror he would see his own beauty face to face.

And were the mirror to be removed, who would become aware of his own beauty?

Had Joseph seen his own beauty he would have cut both the orange and his hand.

But since his beauty was not visible to him, he could not die of love for himself.

Being unable to see himself he could not be afflicted with love of himself.

But if another were to see him, he would without question cut both orange and hand.⁸—

[*Ro. 280*]

If thou wouldst have a loved one like Joseph thou must first have eyes like Jacob’s,

In order that the mirror may show thee beautiful and reveal invisible beauty.

He threw a veil over His beauty; He made Adam a mirror of Himself.

When He saw His face clear and plain in the mirror, he beheld an invisible beauty made visible.

He much admired His beauty. Do not suppose that He admired another.

If a son of Adam, in his vanity, gives himself the name of "beautiful", He falls into the same error as that mirror;⁹ he remains on the outside of the circle.

If thou sit in seclusion for a hundred ages waiting to see thy face thou shalt not see it.

Hast thou seen anyone who has seen his own face? No one has heard that anyone ever heard of such a prodigy.

If thou see a reflection in the mirror how then canst thou see thy actual face?

Since thy face is neither eternal nor transitory, how then canst thou ever see it?

And since it is impossible to see thy face, but only the mirror in front of thee,

Take care that thou do not sigh in front of that mirror lest that moon-like face becomes obscured.

[*Ri.* 359]

Keep thy cold breath within thy soul; hold it as divers do.

For if thou feel the slightest movement within thyself thou shalt find the reflection is as nothing.

Be neither dead nor asleep nor awake; cease to be at all; remember this.

Thou already hast what thou seekest throughout the world; lose thyself as lovers do and thou shalt find it.'

(6) Story of Aḥmad Ghazzālī¹⁰

'Thus said Aḥmad Ghazzālī one day before a company of men of shining heart who had staked their all:

"When Jacob, in search of the beauty of the fair Joseph, came to Egypt from the House of Sorrows,¹¹

Joseph went quickly up to him and tightly embraced the grief stricken man.

But Jacob cried out: 'Where is Joseph? Has he fallen down the well?'

They said to him: 'What art thou saying? Why dost thou seek him when thou holdest him in thy arms?'

Thou didst smell the smell of the shirt in Canaan, and yet now that thou seest him it is as though thou didst not see him.'

[*Ro.* 281]

The prophet Jacob answered: 'Today I have become Joseph himself.

If I smelt the smell of Joseph it was because I was then Jacob.

Now I am all I—who is Joseph? I have found myself and that is enough.”—

If for a while thou bow thy head over thyself thou shalt find some sign of what thou seekest.

But when thou art freed from everything so that thou neither grieve nor rejoice,

Thou shalt be drawn out from under the revolving wheel and dyed with the colour of the brave.’

[*Ri.* 360]

(7) Story of Abū ‘Alī Fārmadī¹²

‘Sincere guides upon the Way have related of Bū ‘Alī of Fārmad

That he said: “O man, neither rejoice if thou art called nor be down-hearted if thou art disappointed and rejected.

If thou art accepted do not regard it as a triumph and if thou art rejected never turn thy back in flight.

For if thou art not deluded for a moment by prosperity, thou shalt not afterwards be grieved by calamity.

They will display thee in all kind of forms, but when thou chooseth none of them,

They will produce thee in another colour, different from the rest.

When this colour falls upon thy rags the two worlds will be perfumed with ambergris from thy scent.

If thou take on this colour, pure and unmixed, thy copper will become gold and thy body soul—no less.”—

If thou take on this colour, O peerless one, never shalt thou want any single thing.

Since all things will be what they are through thee, how shalt thou then desire any thing?

When thou art always thou without intermediary then shalt thou have all things for ever.

When thou art absorbed into God, men shall ask of thee but thou shalt ask for nothing.’

(8) Story of the question put to Majnūn about Lailā¹³

‘A friend, in friendly conversation, said to Majnūn: “How much dost thou love Lailā?”

He answered: “By the Lord of the empyrean and the firmament, I do

not love her. Why dost thou ask?"

[*Ro.* 282]

Said his friend: "But composing all these verses, remaining without food and sleep night and day,

Lying thus wretchedly amidst dust and blood—what is all this if not from love?"

Majnūn replied: "That is now over, for Majnūn is now Lailā and Lailā Majnūn.

[*Ri.* 361]

Duality has disappeared; all is now Lailā and Majnūn is no more.

Like milk and wine they have dissolved into each other; they have escaped the taint of duality.

Since unity has manifested itself here there is no longer room for duality."—

If thou wouldst give thy soul for Him, go, lose thyself and He will appear.

Lose thyself in such manner that thou shalt not find thyself again in this life.'

(9) Story of Bāyazīd and the traveller¹⁴

'A stranger came from some place to visit Bāyazīd; he knocked at his door as though he were a friend.

In the middle of the house the wise sage was standing plunged in thought.

He said: "Wilt thou not say from whence thou art?" The stranger said: "I know thee.

I am a stranger come to meet thee, having followed the scent of Bāyazīd from far away."

The world-illuminating shaikh replied: "O dervish, for thirty years now I have wished to see Bāyazīd. I have searched far and wide for him but have found not even the dust of his feet.

I do not know what has befallen him or whither he has gone. It is thirty years since he left me.

His being had been so stifled with gold that he had been forgotten for thirty years."—

He that is for ever absorbed in gold can never have knowledge of himself.

But that is the true alchemy which travellers on the Road call "Light of God".

If it shine for a while on an infidel he receives from it a whole world of light.

When that light fell upon Pharaoh's magicians, they drew close to God after being so far removed.¹⁵

[*Ri.* 326]

And if it shine for a while upon an old woman it makes her, like Rābi'a,¹⁶ one of the great ones of this world.

And if it shine for a while upon a labourer bestowing honour upon him, it will make of him as eminent a saint as Khurqānī.¹⁷

And though but a single ray of it shine upon a Ma'rūf,¹⁸ from being a Christian he becomes renowned for his faith.

[*Ro.* 283]

And if it appear to a Fuḍail,¹⁹ from a highwayman he becomes a traveller upon the road to mysteries.

And if it enter the soul of an Ibn Adham²⁰ his heart becomes the Sultan of both worlds.

And if it fall upon the body, that clay becomes a heart, and if it fall upon the heart it becomes a pure soul.

When the soul finds that light within itself, it regards the two worlds as no longer existent.

When the soul is utterly absorbed in that light it utters the words "Ṣubḥānī" and "Ana'l-Ḥaqq".²¹

When in utter purity it enters the forecourt of paradise, these words will come to it from the Divine Presence:

"This letter is from the Peerless King to the Eternal King.

Since We have clad him in Our own robe this letter is from the Most Holy to the Most Holy."²²

Since thou canst become Most Holy for all eternity, all of thy body turning to heart and all of thy heart to soul;

Since He has given thee His own image and attributes, come let Him give thee this knowledge also.'

(10) Story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Shaikh Khurqānī²³

'Returning from a journey Maḥmūd went early in the day to visit Khurqānī.

But in order to test the shaikh the king called his favourite Ayaz,

Put his own clothes on him and said: "I am the body guard and he the world-illuminating king."

But having taken a single glance Khurqānī said: "Thou art not the body guard, thou art the king.

[*Ri.* 363]

Draw near, O dervish king, for God has given thee the first rank.

Though thou art a king, O Maḥmūd, yet thy heart yearns after beggardom.

Thou art king of all the world; thou holdest everything in thy hands, and yet thou must have this also.

Being king of the whole world why dost beg a piece of bread like a dervish?"—

Dost thou not see how He Who was the Maḥmūd of Eternity Past did, as it were, this same thing?

He had limitless oceans of attributes and a world full of knowers and knowledge.

All of this He renounced for the sake of man; He went forth in the shape of the creatures of this world.

In His purity He chose this attribute; He appeared in the guise of this attribute.

He said to man: "When I was sick, what ailed thee that thou didst not visit Me?

[*Ro.* 284]

When I sought bread and water at thy door, I went away without either.²⁴

For I will redeem thy goods and thy person and yet I ask thee for a loan. O wondrous mystery!

And yet in spite of it all I yearn for thee and love thee. It would be well if thou didst yearn for Me."

O friend, I understand nothing of this. What suffering is this, what love, what fire?

Divinity is eternal self-sufficiency; servitude is the path of slaves.

To be self-sufficient one must be divine; and yet divinity is found in servitude.

O Lord, this is a hard matter; no one knows the answer to this riddle,

[*Ri.* 364]

That mankind are like Ayaz clad in the clothes of Maḥmūd.

Since in the beginning He gave thee His shape, He will in the end give thee His attributes.

Now He has made thy name His, and now He has made His name ours and mine.

But since I have no authority, what shall I say? God is near, and thou art far away—what shall I say?

How canst thou find thy way to God whilst thou livest for thyself? Only by self-forgetfulness canst thou find the way.

If thou seek the musk of God here below, do not be less than the musk-deer at dawn.'

(11) Story of the deer from which musk is produced²⁵

'It is related by eminent scholars that there is a deer which for forty days and nights

Eats neither grass nor thorns but seeks out once or twice sweet-smelling flowers.²⁶

Having passed these forty days in such purity it turns its head at day-break towards the dawn.

And when the dawn exhales its breath it draws that morning breath within itself.

When that breath passes into its life's blood, musk flows from its navel.²⁷

Because of that breath musk is produced from it; and because of that breath it is sought by great multitudes.—

Who in all the world knows of such a breath whereby blood is turned in a single instant into musk?

Since a pure breath can change blood into musk, it can also change clay into a living soul.

[Ro. 285]

Aye, when the light of God enters thy soul, thy body at once takes on the colour of the soul.

What more shall I say? I can say no more for my soul has not the authority.

If thou practise alchemy, practise it thus, but practise it in the way of the Faith.

Such alchemy is not in the empyrean nor the firmament; seek it in thy soul. What more wouldst thou know?

Practise this alchemy if thou art a man of the Way, for this is a divine alchemy for the soul.

[Ri. 365]

To tell thee more secrets than this is permissible only on the gallows.

There are other stages beyond this; I do not know if anyone has knowledge of them.

I cannot go along this road by myself, for without His permission I have nothing.

If leave is given me I shall speak, otherwise it is best if this secret remains hidden.'

Epilogue

Though speech be loftier than the holy empyrean, yet it is the lowest rung in the poetry of Farid.¹

A traveller from the highest worlds will never tell what I have told.

I have raised up speech to a height to which there is none who can ascend.

I have shown thee the breath of Jesus; like the dawn I have displayed the White Hand.²

From the many gardens that I leave as a memorial the world is as beautiful as the garden of paradise.

Many nights will noble men rejoice till morning because of my gardens.

He that boasted of his poetry, breathing gently like the true dawn,

Had he lived till my age would have died when he looked upon this.

Aye, when the sun appears the dawn is left without a whit of honour.

Since the sea³ of my poetry was full it threw up thousands of fountains upon the shore.

Since the sea of my poetry produced fountains at every instant upon every shore,

One of those fountains is the lofty sun which scatters the bounty of its light upon the world.

[*Ri.* 366]

Had it not received help from the sea of my poetry never would it have saved its head from its own sword.⁴

The sun will be dimmed on Judgment Day but this poetry shall shine for ever,

To be sung every day in paradise to the tune of love by heart-delighting houris.

[*Ro.* 286]

Since all of my poetry is a pure declaration of God's unity why shouldst thou not chant it in paradise?

I have opened the door of God's treasury and have called this work *Ilāhi-nāma*.⁵

The saints that live in the seven heavens shall read the *Ilāhi-nāma* of 'Aṭṭār.

Because of the glory of this work I am possessed of royalty, for the *Ilāhi-nāma* comes from God's bounteousness.

Every moment He sends me a new life; every instant He sends me a meal from the unseen.

Since I receive my daily bread from the unseen, why should I be the slave of wretched men?

A heart that has been softened with the divine teaching does not wish for warmed-up food.

I sit alone in a corner like Waḥshī;⁶ from the world I ask only a bowl of Ḥamza soup.

Since Waḥshī had no peace because of Ḥamza, what have I to do with Ḥamza and Waḥshī?

Imprisoned beneath this turquoise dome all I need in this world is a house.

What should I do with the length and breadth of the earth, the blueness of the sky and the vast expanse of the world?

The kingdom I have is enough for me; if I want for anything it is but a rue-seed.⁷

As king of the land of contentment I can always do whatever I like.

(1) Story of the man who passed by a school⁸

A holy man passed by a school, where he espied two boys.

One had bread and meat in front of him, while the other had only bread.

[*Ri.* 367]

The second one asked the first for some of his meat for he could not do without it.

The first boy said: 'If thou wilt be my dog and run at my heels in the same way as a dog,

Thou shalt have some of my meat, otherwise thou shalt have bread only and nothing else.'

The other boy agreed and began to run about in the road like a dog.

The first boy put a rope around his neck and said: 'Be a dog; make the noise of a dog and run about like one.'

He did as he was ordered and so received some meat on his bread.

A holy man said to him: 'If thou wert clever, child,

Thou wouldst have contented thyself with bread and so have saved thyself from being a dog.

[*Ro.* 287]

Thou must forego meat if thou art not to run about like a dog.'—

How long wilt thou run through the world like a dog after so much carrion and bones?

Maḥmūd paid the poet only a few dirhems for the *History of Persia*.⁹

As for thee, if thou were to produce an elephant-load of poetry, never wouldst thou receive a single dirhem.

For even if that elephant-load were not worth less, yet all the poet received was a draught of beer.¹⁰

Behold the endeavours of the poet and see now what came of them.

Praise be to God, I am ripe in the Faith and have no need of anyone in this world.

I have more than I need; why should I reach out my hand after more still?

(2) Words of a man of God

Thus said a man of God, well versed in all the mysteries:

'All that thou hast and needest it is better for thee to renounce it than to have it.

[*Ri.* 368]

There is nothing in both worlds that it would not be better for thee if it were not than if it were.'—

Even though the two worlds are a paradise, it is enough for me to walk within my soul.

Since my pure soul is an Eden, I have a hundred Jupiters in Sagittarius.¹¹

Such a paradise and no companion; a heart filled with the mystery of love and no one to confide in.

Since every companion I see is a veil, therefore my constant companion is a book.

Since I can find no companion I confide my troubles to this book.

There is one solitary pain in the depths of my heart which gives rise to all these many words.

Whether I speak little or much, why should I seek another to speak to? I speak to myself.

I have stretched out my hand around the whole world and yet have found no companion of any kind.

And though I found one to come to my aid, he would not be true to me but would deceive me.

Although the dawn has a companion yet that companion is not a true friend.

Amongst all mankind everywhere I see not a single jot of loyalty.

There is none in me either, therefore I cannot expect it of others.

[*Ro.* 288]

I am not a confidant to myself, who then can be one to me?

I have seen none of the travellers along the road of the Faith; I have seen no trace of the Brethren of Purity.¹²

I have walked far, yet I am still where I was; I do not know what was

the use of my walking.

O heart, thy friends and companions have gone.

How long wilt thou engage in vain endeavours? Be off with thee! How long wilt thou procrastinate?

Thou hast devoured a whole world like one who had nothing to do; thou hast thought not all of the task allotted to thee.

[*Ri. 369*]

Perform thy task today while thou still hast time; light the fire whilst thou still hast fire within thee.

All are asleep, drunk and sober alike; when wilt thou awake from thy slumber?

How long wilt thou utter these subtle sayings knowing that thou must soon sleep in the dark?

Thou speakest like Abraham but thou actest like Nimrod.

Thou couldst die like a man of action; it would be a great misfortune if thou shouldst die like so much carrion.

Why concern thyself so much with words? If thou art a man of valour enter boldly into the state of the mystics.

If thy heart finds peace in words how can it acquire fame through the condition of true men?

These words are after all nothing but a shell; seek, like a true man, to attain to the mystical state.

Thou hast spent all thy precious life in talking—when wilt thou act?

However perfect poetry may be, when thou considerest it it is but the menstruation of men.

If thy heart had but the slightest morsel of knowledge thou wouldst have nothing at all to do with story-telling.

But I see that thy poetry is always thy idol; thy sole occupation is idolatry.¹³

(3) Story of the man who asked a question of Uwais¹⁴

A man of pure soul said to Uwais: 'They say that thirty years ago such-and-such a person

Dug himself a grave and hung up his winding-sheet in it.

And there he sits at the head of the grave never ceasing from weeping.

He neither rests by day nor sleeps by night; his eyes are drained dry from constant shedding of tears.

Never in the world has there been anyone in such fear and dread as he.

[*Ro. 289*]

Hast thou seen him, O holy guide?' Uwais answered: 'Take me where he is.'

He went thither and found the man just as he had been told, half dead with fear of the sword of death;

[*Ri.* 370]

A wretch as lean as a toothpick, his face turned from a full moon into a crescent;

Blood pouring in floods from either eye, his heart filled with fire and his tongue like a flame;

His winding-sheet lying in front of him and his grave ready dug. He sat at the head of it like one already dead.

Uwais said to him: 'O man without knowledge of the mysteries, this grave and winding-sheet hold thee back from God.

Thou worshipping thy own imaginings; thou worshipping only the grave and the winding-sheet.

Thou art absorbed in these things and for thirty years they have kept thee apart from God.

For thirty years the grave and winding-sheet have been thy idols, highwaymen lurking on the road to God.'

When that devoted dervish saw the calamity that had overtaken him his spirit departed from him.

Having been blind to the mystery of truth he gave out a cry and fell into the grave.

Like a bird he flew up out of the snare of life; he died and so was saved from idolatry.—

To a man like this, for all his boundless asceticism, grave and winding-sheet were like so many screens.

Thy screen arose out of thy poetry, for by that idol thou art kept apart from God.

There were many idols that I broke, and now I stand as an idol-worshipper before my poetry.

I cast off thousands of wooden bonds and now I am imprisoned in the bonds of love.

I shall fly aloft if I can renounce my bonds; otherwise I shall die, with downcast head, in those same bonds.

Since I am kept apart from God by an idol, how can I share secrets with Him?

The disaster that has overtaken me was, I am certain, brought upon me by myself.

Had 'Aṭṭār addressed to himself all these words that he has addressed to thee,

[*Ri.* 371]

He would, in worth, have passed the seventh heaven; he would have risen above the choir of angels.

Strange what an ill-omened thing is speech, by which a dog is freed and

a man enchained!

O heart, here is not thy abiding-place; honour and power are disgrace for thee here below.

Do not hold thy head high on account of honour or power; endure thy sorrow and do not heave a sigh.

Thou hast been too long a tongue; now, like a true man, make thyself all ear from head to toe.

Many a calamity befalls the speaker because of his tongue; gold is held in honour because it is mute.

[*Ro.* 290]

The pen is always being beheaded because it has two tongues in one mouth.

When the scales thrust out their tongue Fate makes them render account grain by grain.

Tomorrow on Judgment Day it is thy tongue, of all thy limbs, that the Judge will imprison.

The lily has won the name of 'noble' because with ten tongues it has chosen to be dumb.¹⁵

Thou shalt be as silent as the mountains; do not let the froth on thy lips be as agitated as the sea.

(4) Story of the death of Alexander the Greek¹⁶

When Alexander departed from this world, a sage said: 'O august monarch,

Since thou wert destined to disappear under the ground, why didst thou indulge in so many pleasures?'—

Alas and alas for my life! I can do nothing but say 'Alas!'

I have seen the fruits of my life and I have given up all hope.

I have done nothing but shed my own blood; all my life I have been my own bane.

All my life, as long as I can remember, has been spent in the hope of improvement; and yet it is now worse.

The world has taken away my health and given me illness; it has taken my youth and given me old age in exchange.

[*Ri.* 372]

Since I exist no longer either in body or in soul I do not wish to continue for another instant.

There is nothing left but to die, for there is nothing left of my life.¹⁷

Though I know nothing of annihilation yet annihilation is the only prospect I can see.

Sometimes I mourn, sometimes I make merry, for now there are promises and now threats.

All that I had in the world was my heart; now that has turned to blood and I know nothing more.

Many are the sorrows that fill my heart; it is filled at once with fire and with blood.

That I shall sink in this sea is certain; I fear lest I may not rise up again out of it.

Why should my heart be in such dread of death? For I am nothing and my heart is attached to nothing.

All of my life has been passed amidst fables; who would begin a second life?

I am empty-handed because my works were at fault; the foot of my soul, in its confusion, is caught in the mire.

Like the people of Moses I am lost in the desert; I have fallen out of materialism into anthropomorphism.

[Ro. 291]

I am neither called nor rejected; I stand in the middle between belief and unbelief.

Now I sit in the corner of bewilderment, making my hand a column for my face.

If thou wouldst have a whole world of sorrow, sit for a while next to my heart.

For I have so much grief and sorrow it is as though I had a hundred mountains on my heart.

Every instant a hundred thousand pains pour down like rain from the heavens upon this heart.¹⁸

Like a rose I have spent my precious life amongst thorns when I should have been at my work.

Since I cannot tell my tale, I will hold my breath; I will be dumb.

[Ri. 373]

What can I say? What I should like to say has already been said. To whom should I say it? Mankind are all asleep.

The tongue of science burns like the sun, but the tongue of divine knowledge is eternally silent.

Like a drunken man I have talked my fill about my confusion; now I shall lie beneath the soil like a handful of dust.

Thou bidst me speak no more. I shall not. And yet what can I do? I shall burn if I do not speak.

You are always asking me to speak, but you never ask about my burning.¹⁹

Friend, I have told thee my experiences; do not begrudge me a prayer.

If thou wilt offer up a sincere prayer for me, a hundred lights will penetrate into my grave.

No one attains to anything and if he does from time to time he does not always.

Therefore it is better that without shame or hypocrisy he content himself with a single prayer in the early morning.

And now I call upon men of heart for their sincere prayer in private communion with God.

The object of these words is to obtain men's prayers, for there are no disinterested acts save those of God.

Friend, I have told thee the condition of holy men; if thou art such, do not forget me.

If thou have but the slightest inkling of that mystery thy breast will for ever be filled with anguish.

If thou be in mourning on this account it is fitting that thou shouldst lament also.

But thou art so full of vanity that when thou hearest lamentation thou takest it to be idle sport.

Lamentation befits noble minds; it is the only course of the unfortunate.

If thou art a lover who has lost his loved one or if thou art distraught and wretched,

Thou hast no course but to lament, thou hast no other choice.

[Ro. 292]

Thou seekest a sign of that which has no sign, and there will never be an end to thy seeking.

Strange! Thou hast lost nothing. Why then art thou searching so eagerly?

[Ri. 384]

(5) Story of the street-sweeper²⁰

Someone said to a street-sweeper: 'There is something about thee that surprises me:

Thou seekest, poor wretch, what thou hast not lost; what thou hast not lost thou wilt never find.'

The street-sweeper answered: 'There is something even stranger: if I do not find what I have not lost,

I am extremely vexed, and this is much more surprising than what thou saidst.'—

One can neither find nor lose; it is right neither to keep silent nor to speak.

Thy aim should be not to be thou; to be neither this nor that, but both.

(6) Story of the Prophet Job²¹

A holy man has said: 'If the Prophet Job was for so many years plagued with worms,

The purpose of so much torment was to draw from him a sigh, and when he heaved a sigh, the Lord delivered him.

But when the saw was cruelly held above the head of Zacharias, the Lord said to him: "If thou heave a single sigh,

I shall expunge thy name from the list of prophets. Breathe not a breath until the saw has finished thee." ²²—

Behold the wondrous works of God: He asks the one for a sigh and the other for silence.

One can neither heave a sigh from one's bosom nor can one keep silent. Mark this well.

These two things, body and soul, are like a sea of which neither top nor bottom nor middle is visible.

In this sea one may neither keep silent nor speak, neither stand still nor move about.

O noble man, how long wilt thou twist and turn? How wilt thou find thy way seeing that thou art nothing?

[Ri. 375]

Before thee are a thousand veils of darkness and light; how shalt thou complete the long journey?

Thou shalt bear a thousand chains until Judgment Day; how then shalt thou find thy way to salvation,

[Ro. 293]

Unless the veil rises up before thee and the sun of God's grace shines upon thee?

For when that grace shines from God's Court, it will bring the cure of a thousand pains.

(7) Story of the Bedouin and the Prophet²³

A Bedouin came to the Prophet with the hem of his garment clasped firmly to his bosom.

He said to him: 'I will become a Muslim if thou canst tell me what I have in the hem of my garment.'

Said the Prophet: 'Thou hast a pigeon with two young pigeons in its bosom.'

Convinced by the truth of that miracle the man at once made sincere confession of Islam.

He said to the Prophet: 'Who told thee this?' The Prophet answered:

'It was God, the greatest Sultan.'

All the Arabs who were there present marvelled at the pigeon,
Which had drawn its young ones close under its wing.

The Prophet said: 'O Companions and Helpers, why do you marvel at this?

I swear by the God Who has sent me openly to His creation

That He is a hundred times more loving to every sinner in this world

Than is this mother today to her two young ones; this mother who has shown you all what tenderness is.'

(8) On the divine mercy²⁴

There is an authentic tradition that tomorrow there will be one of God's servants whom He

Will call seventy times and for shame he will not raise his head.

God will say to him: 'Do not grieve so much, for today is the day of reconciliation.

Raise thy head. How long wilt thou refuse? Consider thyself as not having done all that thou shouldst not have done.'

My friend, all is easy for God, for if the pain comes from Him so does the cure.

Since eternity is easy for God, it is not right that thou shouldst think it difficult.

(9) Story of Bū Sahl's dream

One night, just before dawn, Bū Sahl Šu'lūkī²⁵ dreamt that all at once

[Ro. 294]

Bū Sa'id of Mihna arrived from afar with light streaming down from his face.

The world was lit up with his face; the earth was like a rose-garden from his scent.

He asked him: 'O virtuous shaikh, what did God do to thee there? Tell me,

For I am consumed with fear of His punishment.' Bū Sa'id replied:

'It is easier for God than His helpless creatures imagine.

If the grace of God come to thy aid, thou wilt prosper in the world.

If thou commit a hundred sins and perform one act of devotion, thou shalt be saved.'

(10) Story of the Prophet and the woman²⁶

The Prophet said: 'There was a most depraved woman who in her faith was as draggled-tailed as mud.

She was walking along the road in the desert when she came upon a well.

[*Ri.* 376]

She saw a dog standing beside it, its tongue hanging out from thirst.

Out of pity she forsook her errand and made a bucket out of her shoe and a rope out of her *chādur*.

She drew up some water and gave it to the dog to drink; and God showed honour to her in both worlds.

On the night of my ascension I saw her, as beautiful as the moon, inhabiting Paradise.'—

A depraved woman gave some water to a dog and received from God so great a reward.

If thou comfort someone's heart for a single instant, thy reward will outweigh the two worlds.

Self is perdition, strive to divest thyself of it in order that in self-forgetfulness thou mayest rise to the highest heights.

It was because of self that Iblīs was accursed; he exalted himself above all others.

If thou purge thyself of thy own Iblīs-ness, thou shalt be fashioned of as good clay as was Adam.

If Iblīs is filled with self, it is because he has eternal hope of God's mercy.

(11) Story of Shibli and Iblīs²⁷

Shibli, the world-illuminating imam, was passing by 'Arafāt²⁸ one day
[*Ri.* 295]

When his glance suddenly fell upon Iblīs. He said to him: 'O thou accursed of God,

Thou art neither a believer nor a worshipper; why art thou walking in this throng?

Since thy fate is so black, hast thou still some hope in God?

When the sorrowful Iblīs heard these words, he opened his mouth and said: 'O shaikh of the world,

For a hundred thousand years, for a whole eternity, I have worshipped God between fear and hope.

I guided the angels to His presence; I pointed out His threshold to those that had lost their way.

My heart was filled with reverence for Him and I acknowledged His oneness.

And yet despite all this He drove me without any reason out of His court,
[Ri. 377]

And none of the people of His court dared to say "Why didst thou treat him so?"

If then He should now take me back without any reason, it would not be surprising. None can explain this mystery.

As I was rejected by Him without a reason, so I may be called back by Him without a reason.

For there is no "how" or "why" in the works of God, therefore it is wrong to abandon hope in Him.

As His wrath commanded my rejection, it will not be strange if His grace may call me back again.'—

I do not know, I do not know, O Lord. Thou knowest and Thou knowest what Thou wilt.

One Thou callest to Thee with a hundred caresses, and one Thou drivest away with a hundred blows,

And yet the one has performed no act of piety nor the other committed any sin. No one can fathom Thy decree.²⁹

I conjure Thee, that art like to no one, that in that hour when Thou shalt spare no one

Thou mayst pass over my crimes and baseness and look with Thy grace upon me, base though I am.

Do not trample me cruelly to death beneath the feet of the elephant of Thy wrath, for I have not even the endurance of an ant.

Not having the strength of an ant I cannot withstand the elephant of Thy wrath.

I am filled with sorrow; rejoice my heart. Kill me or lift the yoke from my neck.

If I have done wrong it is to myself; I did more wrong because of Thy grace.

Whether I have done right or wrong, Thou knowest that I have done it to myself.

Since Thou art above both right and wrong, pass over them both and grant me salvation.

Though I am bound to good and bad, I shall not say good or bad about bad or good.

Since without reason Thou hast bestowed fortune upon many, bestow it now without reason on me also.

[Ri. 378]

Since without reason Thou hast granted me life, submerge me without reason in Thy generosity.³⁰

My suffering does not bring Thee relief, nor is there any motive for Thy bounty.

Do not then rend my veil because of my deeds; draw a line through all I have done.

Is not the unbeliever who embraces the Faith a saint from the very first day?

By his confession of Islam after all those years of unbelief his heart is washed pure and he attains to eternal bliss.

O Lord, I have suffered much along this road, but consider me as having just set out upon the journey.

Consider me to be a penitent unbeliever; consider me as a new convert to Islam.

(12) Story of Bāyazīd and his girding himself with the *zunnār*³¹

When the saint of Bisṭām lay at death's door, he said to his friends: 'O good people,

Bring me this moment a *zunnār* for this poor madman to gird it about him.'

They cried out saying: 'The *zunnār* will be of no service to thee.

How, O Sultan of mysteries, can a *zunnār* gird the waist of Bāyazīd?'

Again he asked his friends for a *zunnār* but none could bring himself to obey him.

He pleaded with them but none of them knew what course to take.

They said: 'If it was predestined that the shaikh should be damned, what can we do to prevent it?'

They brought him a *zunnār*; he girded it about him and burst into tears.

He rubbed his face in the dust; he groaned in anguish of soul and pain of heart.

He shed blood from his blood-raining eyes, and then he tore the *zunnār* off his waist.

He opened his mouth and said: 'O Immutable and Absolute God, I entreat Thee by Thy eternal divinity

[*Ri.* 379]

That having just this instant torn off the *zunnār* may I be considered to have been a Guebre these seventy years.

Would not a Guebre that turned to Thee at such a moment become by a single act of Thy grace possessed of all the mysteries?

I am that Guebre having turned to Thee at this moment; though I come late I have turned to Thee in the end.'

So saying he renewed his confession of faith and gave voice to endless lamentations.—

Although I have travelled a long road, consider me as having just set out.

Thou knowest, O Lord, that I am as nothing; why then dost Thou demand so much of nothing?

What have I? I have endless pain; I have as my sole possession a new heart.

[Ro. 297]

My heart is in ruins and consumed with fire; what tax wouldst Thou levy on a ruin?

If Thou seek weaknesses I have many. I do not know if anyone is as weak as I.

None but Thou knows of my grief; but if no other knows Thou knowest.

Why should I speak when I know that Thou seest all? Whom am I seeking when Thou art ever present?

Thou wilt give whether I ask or not; Thou knowest whether I speak or not.

We are poor helpless wretches bound in chains: what can these helpless wretches do?

Thou hast neither profit nor loss from Thy creatures, therefore all Thy mercy is for sinners.

(13) Prayer of Ibrāhīm the son of Adham⁸²

Before the Ka'ba Ibrāhīm the son of Adham spoke thus to God: 'O Lord of the Universe,

Keep me innocent and free from sin; preserve me from the sins that men commit.'

There came a Voice to him from the unseen saying: 'This freedom from sin for which thou askest Me

Is what all mankind ask Me for. If I granted thy wish and theirs

[Ri. 380]

And you were all of you free from sin, you would all be deprived of My Mercy.

If I never saw any but sinless men whom should I then have to forgive?'—

His mercy is like a thousand boundless seas, and yet His servant has ground for fear.

I do not understand my frustration, nor do I know whither my wandering mind is tending.

I have nothing in the world but the fear of death; I am the tongue that interprets His pain.

I have had no benefit from life. I have suffered loss but I have had little gain.

I am content to die and leave this life; if Thou wouldst save me, Thou canst.

From head to foot there is no part of my body on which Thou wilt not see a fresh wound every instant.

(14) Story of the libertine begging from a shopkeeper³³

A libertine, covered with scars and filled with pain, stood in front of a certain man's shop.

[Ro. 298]

He asked the man for something but he would give him nothing; and he stood for a long time in front of the shop.

The wily shopkeeper said: 'I will give thee nothing unless thou wound thyself.

After thou hast wounded thyself ask me for a coin, otherwise thou canst stand and beg as long as thou likest.'

At once the libertine bared his body and said: 'Look closely.

If thou see upon my whole body from head to foot a single spot that does not bear a hundred wounds,

Tell me to inflict a wound in that place, for I know of no such spot.

If there is a place where I am not wounded, I would not begrudge thee a mortal blow.

But since there is no part of me from head to foot without a wound on it, give me something that I may have some peace.

Since the whole of my body is covered with wounds it is now the turn of my spirit.'—

O God, I am like that poor beggar, for there is no part of my body that is not covered with a hundred wounds.

Search my body from head to foot; there are more wounds than thou canst say.

[Ri. 381]

I breathe for a moment with relief when for a moment I forget my hundred wounds.

And yet when for a moment I do not feel my hundred wounds I feel no relief from being alive.

Though I become pain itself from head to foot, may I be an unbeliever if I have enough of pain.

It is grief for Thee that I would have from Thy world; I have no grief when I grieve for Thee.

Alas that I have not a hundred thousand lives to pour like rain at the feet of my grief for Thee.³⁴

When I hear the sound of *hā* and *hū* I am all *hā* and *hū* and shouting.³⁵

I have seen Thee and I have obliterated self; I am alive in Thee and dead to myself.

If it can remain so always, this will be perfection; but if I return to myself, it will be my decline.

O God, comfort this distracted heart; release me from this distressful prison.

At the moment when my soul rises up into my throat I shall have lost all hope of mankind.

Give my body the light of the tomb; give my heart eternal knowledge.

When this kingdom of my existence shall have passed away, do not leave me without some share in the sea of Thy generosity.

(15) Story of Hārūn al-Rashīd at the time of his death³⁶

When Hārūn al-Rashīd, that wakeful man, was caught in the snare of death,

[Ro. 299]

He descended from his throne, cast away his crown and made his home amongst the dust and ashes.

Then laying his head humbly on the ground he opened his mouth and said: 'O holy Judge,

I conjure Thee by Thy Omnipotence and Thy never-ending Empire,
Have mercy on this poor vile wretch, for the end of his empire is in sight.

All of this grief weighs down upon my reeling heart because I do not know how my last breath will be.'

(16) Story of Shaikh Aqṭa'³⁷ at the time of his death

When the appointed hour came to Shaikh Aqṭa' he wept over himself with a hundred lamentations.

They said to him: 'O blessed shaikh, art thou so afraid of death?'

He answered: 'I long for death; all that sustains me in this world is the thought of death.

But I fear, and my fear causes me a hundred torments, lest at this moment my ship fall into a whirlpool.

I do not know whether it will sink to the bottom or whether it will be saved.

If God displays His wrath, the ship will sink, otherwise I shall dwell in Paradise for ever.

One of these fates is now in store for me; I weep because I do not know which.

If a man sail his ship unharmed for a hundred years and if he then be drowned, what will befall him?

And yet, lost wanderer though I am, it is my hope that at that moment the protection of God will save my soul.'

(17) Story of the man who made God a depositary

There was a holy man who, every night when he lay down to sleep, used to repeat in deep sincerity the confession of faith.

Then he would say to God: 'O Lord, in Thy lovingkindness receive in trust this small deposit.

For there is not upon the face of the earth a depositary like Thee, nay, Thou art the only depositary.

And so when my strength fails, Thou wilt know and wilt then in my time of need return my deposit.'

When world-consuming Death approached him, he was tongue-tied for three days and nights.

When no more than two breaths were left to him his tongue was loosened and he recited the confession of faith.

No sooner had he finished it than he gave up the ghost; and a Voice from the unseen declared his condition saying:

[Ro. 300]

'O man receive back the deposit which in thy piety thou didst entrust to Me each night.'—

Let then every wise man know that the works of the good are never wasted.

O Lord, if my heart is filled with hope, it is not because of my acts of worship but because of my grey hairs.

It would be vain to base my hopes on my devotion; for in my performance I have been utterly wanting.

There is no whit of reason for Thy forgiveness; it would be surprising if Thou forgavest me for a single hair of my head.

(18) Story of Sajāvandī's asking for a slave

The imam of the Faith, Sajāvandī,³⁸ thus addressed the assembly: 'O seekers of hidden truth,

It is the custom of the preacher to beg, and I am a great beggar.

You must give me a slave and so save yourselves from the bother of an old man's needs.'

One offered him one slave, another a second, another a third and so on

until he had been offered six.

He said: 'I am old and feeble, therefore the slave should be old like me.'

When his disciples heard these words they all held their breath.

At a second assembly and a third he made the same request, but no one produced an old slave.

Then the saint complained and said: 'I never thought it of my disciples

That they would give such a proof of their meanness by refusing me a slave.'

One of them answered: 'It is not their fault, but since thou wantedst an old slave, we walked around the whole town but no one admitted to owning such a slave.

No man, great or small, would consent to bring an old slave to the market.

They all said: "Even under constraint we should be ashamed before God Almighty

To sell an old slave; this would be a most disgraceful act." '

When the saint heard these words, he said: 'I have achieved my purpose.

In asking about that slave my intent was to show that this was the praiseworthy ending.

There is no created being today who would allow an old slave to break his heart.

How then would a kind God sell a slave into bondage?'—

[Ro. 301]

O Lord, although I have fallen very low, yet I am also old and Thy slave.

Although I have walked only in sinful ways, do not sell me, for I am old.

(19) Story of 'Abdallāh the son of Mas'ud³⁹ and his slave-girl⁴⁰

'Abdallāh the son of Mas'ūd had a slave-girl who was possessed of a hundred talents.

When he came upon hard times he sought a purchaser for that slave-girl.

He said to her: 'My dear one, go wash thy clothes and comb thy hair

So that I may sell thee, for I am in need: the body levys a toll on the desolation of the heart.'

Whilst the slave was carrying out his command, she combed out two or three grey hairs.

[Ri. 382]

Her eyes falling on them a thousand tears of blood ran down her cheeks.

When 'Abdallāh found her thus, her eyes like two blood-raining clouds,

He said to her: 'Why art thou weeping? Why art thou so dejected?

I have decided without telling thee not to sell thee after all. Do not weep and wail.'

The slave-girl said: 'I am not weeping on that account, for my life is thine to sell.

I am weeping so bitterly because I have worked all my life for someone
In whose service my hair has turned grey, and in the end I have been
brought to despair.

Why have I served a man who would sell me to meet a need?

Why have I spent my youth in a place where in old age I am disposed of
for money?

Why have I passed my life in a place where the reward for my service is
to be sold?

Why did I make my way to the threshold of another when the Threshold
of God lay before me?

With such a Threshold before him how could anyone make his way to
another?

Master, do not listen to my words; sell me, although I am worth nothing.'

At once Gabriel intervened and said to the Prophet, that never-waning
moon:

'Tell 'Abdallâh, O Faithful One, not to inflict such pain.

Her hair turned grey in the service of Islam; she should look forward to
nothing less than her freedom.'—

[*Ri.* 382]

[*Ro.* 302]

O Lord, I too am Thy slave; do not, in my old age, expose me for sale.

Though I can expect nothing from acts of devotion yet my hair has
grown grey in the ways of Islam.

If Thou sell my life it will be for the burning, for it will feed the fires of
Hell.

What will come of one whose heart and soul are consumed with fire?
What will come of an ant on such a day?

I conjure Thee by Thy glory, O knower of all mysteries, do not cast me
into the pit of impotence.

Do not twist me like wax in the hand of Thy wrath; do not deprive me
of Thy grace.

Consider undone all my good and evil works; by Thy grace deliver me
from self.

For all the good and evil I have done will be like a yoke around my neck.

If Thou wilt not awaken me, consider me dead in the sleep of indiffer-
ence.

I am lost and fallen low, and Thou sittest on high; raise me up, for it
was Thou Who didst cast me low.

I have long been Thy prisoner; show me the way to Thy presence.

Open Thy door to me and, decrepit as I am, make me Thy own; steal away my heart and absorb me in Thyself.

Much ruin has come upon me from self. O Lord, save me from self.

Free me from self if Thou wilt, for Thou canst do whatever Thou wilt.

Deprive me of self, make me selfless, for I am weary of it; consider it not to be there.

I know nothing of self or of good or evil. When Thou art there, what should I do with self?

I conjure thee by Thy knowledge of my state, raise me up out of this whirlpool of blood.

Take me from myself and fasten me to Thee; never let me return to myself.

Call me 'dog' and do not drive me from Thy threshold; one bone will be enough for me in Thy street.

If I receive a single bone in Thy street I will regale the *humā*⁴¹ of the circling heavens.

(20) Story of Bishr Ḥāfī⁴²

Bishr Ḥāfī was walking along early one morning, drunk with the lees of wine and yet pure in his soul,

When he found lying in the road a piece of paper on which was written the name of God.

[*Ri.* 284]

All he had in the world was a single grain. He sold it for musk. See what gain!⁴³

[*Ro.* 303]

At nightfall that God-seeking man perfumed the name of God with his musk.

That night, just before dawn, he dreamt that there came a Voice to him saying:

'O thou who didst raise My name from the dust and with reverence didst both perfume and purify it,

I have made thee a seeker of the truth; I have both perfumed and purified thee.'—

O Lord this sweet-singing 'Aṭṭār has perfumed Thy name with the perfume of his poetry⁴⁴

And yet what though he sang sweetly? Thy name has always been perfumed.

Still by Thy grace make him the dust of Thy doorway; make him famous with Thy name.

He can expect nothing save from Thy grace, for he can produce not a single act of devotion.

Notes

Exordium

- 1 I.e. from the highest height to the lowest depth. The earth, according to Muslim popular cosmogony, is supported on the shoulders of an angel, who stands upon a rock of ruby. The rock in turn is supported by a huge bull and the bull by an enormous fish swimming on a vast ocean.
- 2 I.e. the Devil, Satan. On the attitude of the Šūfis towards Iblis see *MdS*, pp. 536–50. On the name, derived from the Greek *diabolos*, see Horovitz, 1926, p. 87.
- 3 The Muslim name of Enoch the son of Jared, who 'walked with God, and he was not, for God took him' (Genesis, v. 24). On the name, an Arabicisation of the Greek Andreas (Andrew), see Horovitz, 1926, pp. 88–9.
- 4 Koran, (xxvi. 21: '... and drink of a pure beverage shall their Lord give them').
- 5 'Lo!'
- 6 'He', i.e. God, 'the One Real Being'. See *Mathnawī*, vii. 45.
- 7 See above, note 1.
- 8 Adam was expelled from Paradise according to the Muslim tradition for eating, not an apple, but a grain of wheat. See *MdS*, p. 58.
- 9 God's vicar or vicegerent on earth was Adam. See Koran, ii. 28.
- 10 In the original there is a word-play with *gulkhan* 'bath-furnace' and *gulshan* 'rose-garden'.
- 11 The Persian name (*div*) for the Arabic *jinn*, the demons over whom King Solomon possessed absolute power by virtue of a talisman sent down to him from heaven.
- 12 Koran, xcvi. 19.
- 13 According to the Prophet, God said to him one day: 'But for thee I should not have created the heavens'. See *MdS*, p. 132.
- 14 A well-known saying of the Prophet. See *MdS*, p. 226.
- 15 Koran, xlviii. 1.
- 16 Koran, lxi. 13.
- 17 Koran, xv. 72.
- 18 Koran, xciv. 1.
- 19 Koran, xiv. 40. The 'unfruitful valley' is the Valley of Mecca.
- 20 I have been unable to trace this tradition.
- 21 An allusion to the tradition that on the night of Mohammed's birth the sacred fire was extinguished in every Zoroastrian temple in Persia and that all the efforts of the priests and guardians were powerless to relight it.
- 22 When the idolators cast Abraham into a burning pile, Allah caused the fire to lose its heat by pronouncing the words: 'O fire! be thou cold, and to Abraham a safety!' See Koran, xxi. 98, and, for the Talmudic version of the story, Sidersky, pp. 33–5.
- 23 The text has *Kisrā*, the Arabic form of *Khusrau*, the name of four Sassanian kings, which, like Caesar in the case of the Roman and Byzantine emperors, became the generic title of the rulers of Persia.
- 24 There is a word-play on *chīn* 'curl(s)' and *Chīn* 'China'.
- 25 This is a reference to Gabriel's second appearance to Mohammed after a long period of silence. The Prophet, in a state of dejection, had stretched himself on his carpet and

- wrapped his clothes around him, when the angel approached and addressed to him the message of Sūra LXXIV: 'O thou, enwrapped in thy mantle! Arise and warn! . . .'
- 26 'Abū Huraira reported God's messenger as saying, "The way in which I may be compared with the prophets is by a castle which was beautifully constructed, but in which the place of one brick was left incomplete. Sightseers went round admiring the beauty of its construction with the exception of the place for that brick. Now I have filled up the place of that brick, in me the building is completed, and in me the messengers are complete." See *Mishkāt*, p. 1231.
- 27 I.e. the first four Caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī.
- 28 On the story of Umm Ma'bad see *Mishkāt*, p. 1298.
- 29 A reference to the white hand of Moses in the story of the Vision of the Bush (Koran, xxviii. 32; Exodus, iv. 7).
- 30 On the cave in which Mohammed and Abū Bakr took refuge from their enemies see Muir, pp. 134-5: 'Legends cluster around the cave. A spider wove its web across the entrance. Branches sprouted, covering it on every side. Wild pigeons settled on the trees to divert attention, and so forth.'
- 31 In this and the previous line we have an example of the figure known as *ihām*, which 'depends on the employment in a line of two or more ambiguous terms, which, from their juxtaposition appear to be used in one sense, while they are really intended in the other.' See *LHP*, II. 54. Thus *parda* 'screen, (spider's) web' can also be understood as 'musical mode', and '*ushshāq* 'loves', *basta* 'closed' and *rāst* 'true' are names of such modes. So too *bāzī* 'hawk' may be read as *bāzī* 'game, performance'. The lines thus understood would be translated as follows: 'Why dost thou play in the '*ushshāq* mode? Play two performances in the *basta* mode. / I want two performances in this mode. Sing this song in the *rāst* mode.'
- 32 Faridūn, actually a figure of Aryan mythology, appears in the Persian National Epic as the slayer of the tyrant Dāhhāk and the founder of a pre-Achaemenid dynasty. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 17-34.
- 33 Like Faridūn a figure of Aryan mythology, the Yima of the Avesta and the Yama of the Vedas. He appears in the National Epic as a king of ancient Persia overthrown and slain by Dāhhāk. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 9-16. and, for a survey of all the Zoroastrian and Muslim sources on Jamshid, Christensen, 1934.
- 34 The name of a fabulous bird which appears in the *Shāh-nāma* as the foster-parent of Rustam's father Zāl. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 36-9.
- 35 Or 'in China' (cf. note 24, above). The reference is to the well-known saying of the Prophet: 'Seek knowledge even in China'.
- 36 FitzGerald's 'Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects'.
- 37 Or 'those ringlets [*shast*]'.
 38 Cf. Koran, n. 257: '. . . Whoever therefore shall deny Taghūt and believe in God—he will have taken hold on a strong handle that shall not be broken . . .'.
 39 On the Day of Judgment Mohammed will undertake the office of intercessor for the Muslims. See *Mishkāt*, pp. 1180-3, *MdS*, pp. 19-20.
 40 Koran, Lxi. 6: 'And remember when Jesus the son of Mary said, "O children of Israel! of a truth I am God's apostle to you to confirm the law which was given before me, and to announce an apostle that shall come after me whose name shall be Aḥmad."'
 41 Koran, Liii. 8-9: 'Then came He nearer and approached, and was at the distance of two bows, or even closer . . .' On this passage see Paret, 1957, pp. 44-5; also below, p. 358, note 119.
 42 Koran, viii. 17: 'And ye did not slay them, but God slew them; and thou didst not shoot when thou didst shoot but God shot.' The reference is to the victory of Mohammed over the Meccans at the Battle of Badr (624).

- 43 An allusion to the saying of Mohammed: 'I am the prophet with the sword.'
- 44 Koran, xv. 72: 'As thou livest, O Mohammed, they [the people of Sodom] were bewildered in the drunkenness of their lust.' The allusion is to the glory accorded to Mohammed of being directly addressed by God.
- 45 The winged beast, between the size of a mule and a donkey, on which Mohammed made his nocturnal ascent into heaven.
- 46 An allusion to the saying of the Prophet: 'Lord, let my eyes overflow with tears.'
- 47 According to a tradition, someone interrupting the Prophet addressed him as 'the son of the two martyrs', and he did not disavow this appellation.
- 48 Koran, LIII. 17: 'His [Mohammed's] eye turned not aside, nor did it wander.'
- 49 *MdS*, p. 132.
- 50 When the trench which gave its name to the Battle of the Ditch was being dug around Medina, Mohammed is said to have had a stone tied to his belly because, like his companions, he had been three days without food. See *Mishkāt*, p. 1274.
- 51 On Mohammed as the model of ideal poverty see *MdS*, pp. 226-7.
- 52 I.e. the heavens which consisted according to the Arab astronomers of nine spheres.
- 53 The heavens were created by Allah out of smoke (Koran, XLII. 10-11). See also below, p. 362, note 1 to Discourse II.
- 54 Here the nine chambers are the apartments of Mohammed's nine wives. No smoke arose from them because the Prophet and his family lived normally on a diet of dates and water.
- 55 For an account of Mohammed's nocturnal ascent into heaven see below, pp. 12 ff.
- 56 An allusion to the saying of the Prophet: 'My companions are like the stars, so whichever of them you copy you will be guided.' See *Mishkāt*, p. 1320.
- 57 On the 'Light of Mohammed (the Logos) or Universal Reason', the first thing to be created and 'the Light by which all prophets, beginning with Adam, and all the Moslem saints are inspired' see *Mathnawī*, vii. 62 and 270-1.
- 58 The distance to which Mohammed was approached by God. See above, p. 355 and note 41, also below, pp. 358-9 and note 119.
- 59 An allusion to the saying of the Prophet: 'Thy praise, I cannot speak it; it is as Thou hast said it Thyself.'
- 60 An allusion to Mohammed's nocturnal journey to Heaven, where he was admitted to the divine presence after meeting all the prophets that had proceeded him. See below, pp. 12 ff.
- 61 I.e. as a pilgrim to Mecca, who must travel bareheaded. I have adopted an alternative reading in the second half of the line: *barahna-sar* 'bareheaded' for the *bi-rah bi sar* 'headless on the road' of the text.
- 62 An allusion to the saying of the Prophet: 'Whoever sees me in a dream sees the reality, for the Devil never takes on my features.' See Bukhārī, iv. 454-5.
- 63 A reference to the miracle of the splitting of the moon. When the people of Mecca asked Mohammed to show them a sign he showed them the moon split in two pieces, one above and one below Mount Hirā. See Bukhārī, iii. 32; *Mishkāt*, p. 1258.
- 64 See above p. 354, note 14.
- 65 'Ā'isha said: God's messenger used to patch his sandals, sew his garment and conduct himself at home as anyone of you does in his house.' See *Mishkāt*, p. 1248.
- 66 A reference to the proverb: 'The lord of the people is the servant of the people.'
- 67 I.e. his grandsons Ḥasan and Ḥusain. Cf. Hujvīrī, p. 76: '... 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭab relates that one day he saw the Apostle crawling on his knees, while Ḥusayn rode on his back holding a string, of which the other end was in the Apostle's mouth. 'Umar said: "What an excellent camel thou hast, O father of 'Abdallah!" The Apostle replied: "What an excellent rider is he, O 'Umar!"'
- 68 These details are recorded by the traditionist Ibn Sa'd.

- 69 This is not perhaps meant to be taken literally. According to Tirmidhī Moham̄med was 'neither very tall nor excessively short, but was a man of medium size . . .'. See *Mishkāt*, p. 1242.
- 70 The prophet, in reply to a question from 'Ā'isha, is reported to have said: 'Dost thou not know that the earth absorbs within itself all that issues from the prophets?'
- 71 Ambergris (*gāw-'ambar*) was believed to be the excrement of a marine animal, apparently the dugong. See Stephenson, p. 51; *Mathnawī*, vii. 372.
- 72 The Prophet's body cast no shadow because of its permeation by the *nūr-i Muḥammadi*. See above, p. 356, note 57.
- 73 On the Mi'rāj or Ascent of Mohammed into Heaven see *Mishkāt*, pp. 1264-70.
- 74 The name of a tree in Paradise.
- 75 Koran, xxi. 107: 'We have not sent thee otherwise than as mercy unto all creatures.'
- 76 Koran, liv. 54-5: 'Verily, amid gardens and rivers shall the pious dwell, in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King.'
- 77 After his parents' death Mohammed was adopted by his uncle Abū Ṭalib. There is a pun on *Ṭalīb*, which means 'Seeker'.
- 78 In the Romance of Joseph and Zulaikhā (Potipher's wife) we are told how Zulaikhā is brought into Joseph's presence, grown old from grief and blind from constant weeping, and how her beauty and sight are restored in response to his prayers.
- 79 Isaac or Ishmael: the Muslims usually take the latter to have been the intended victim.
- 80 Or 'was proud to find him generous'. In the Muslim tradition the Ark came to rest not on Ararat but on Mount Jūdī in what is now eastern Turkey.
- 81 The keeper of Paradise.
- 82 A spring in Paradise.
- 83 In Paradise the just will drink 'a wine cup tempered at the camphor fountain' and 'there shall they be given to drink of the cup tempered with ginger'. See Koran, lxxvi. 5 and 17.
- 84 Koran, xlvi. 16 and 17: 'Therein [in Paradise] are rivers of water, which corrupt not: rivers of milk, whose taste changeth not: and rivers of wine, delicious to those who quaff it; and rivers of honey clarified.'
- 85 The name of Sūra xx of the Koran, so called because the text is preceded by these two letters of the Arabic alphabet. The same letters occur at the beginning of the word *ṭahūr* 'pure, purifying' in the following quotation from Sūra xlvi; and this is perhaps the point of the line.
- 86 Koran, lxxvi. 21: ' . . . and drink of a pure beverage shall their Lord give them [the just]'.
- 87 Koran, lxxxiii. 25: 'Choice sealed shall be given them [the righteous] to quaff.'
- 88 The elaborate word-plays make the line virtually untranslatable. The word for 'halo' (*kharman*) is the normal Persian word for 'harvest' or 'piled-up grain'. The harvest of the moon provided Burāq with *jau* 'barley' from *Jauzā*, i.e. the constellation Gemini, and *kāh* (*kah*) 'straw' from *Kahkashān*, i.e. the Milky Way.
- 89 Arcturus is called *Simāk-i rāmiḥ* 'Simāk with the lance' to distinguish it from *Simāk-i a'zal* 'unarmed Simāk', i.e. Spica Virginis.
- 90 The Prophet used originally to let his hair hang loose but he afterwards always parted it down the middle. See Bukhārī, rv, 125; *Mishkāt*, pp. 929-30.
- 91 See above, note 74.
- 92 The *cauda draconis* or descending node where the orbit of the moon intersects with that of the sun.
- 93 *Ra's kashida*: *ra's* ('head') is also the *caput draconis* or rising node in the orbit of the moon.

- 94 In the following passage we have an example of the figure known as *tanārūb*. The mention of one of the signs of the Zodiac (Scorpio) involves the mention of all the rest, Taurus and Pisces being represented by the mythical Ox-Fish, on which see below, note 97.
- 95 The Arabo-Persian word for Virgo (*Simbula*) means 'ear of corn'.
- 96 *Jauzā* (Gemini) is also the name of Orion; hence the reference to a belt.
- 97 The ox and fish that support the world (see above p. 354, note 1) are sometimes regarded as a single creature.
- 98 The word for Aquarius (*Dalv*) means literally 'bucket'.
- 99 Sirius and Procyon.
- 100 The constellations Aquila and Lyra.
- 101 The constellation of the Great Bear.
- 102 On the seven orders of saints, of which the greatest is the Pole (*Qu'ṭb*) which has but a single member see Hujviri, pp. 213-14.
- 103 The Arabic name for the Great Bear is *Bandāt al-Na'sh* 'the Women following the Beir', the bier being the four stars in the shape of a quadrilateral and the women the three outer stars forming the tail of the Bear. The star at the tip of the tail has in European astronomy been given the Arabic name of the whole constellation: Benetmasch.
- 104 On the eight gates of Paradise see Bukhārī, II. 442-3 and 516.
- 105 I.e. the nine heavens.
- 106 On this paradisiacal river see Bukhārī, IV. 315-16.
- 107 Reading *lauh* 'table, tablet' for the *nūh* 'Noah' of the text. Upon the Preserved Table (referred to in the Koran, LXXV. 22) both the future actions of mankind and the text of the Koran were recorded before Creation.
- 108 As a rest for the forehead.
- 109 The Frequented Temple (referred to in Koran, LII. 4), i.e. the prototype of the Ka'ba created by God in the seventh heaven. It was shown to Mohammed by Gabriel. See *Mishkāt*, p. 1266; Porter, 1974, p. 77.
- 110 The 'lote-tree of the boundary' of Koran, LIII. 14. Mohammed was taken up to it by Gabriel and 'saw that its fruits were like the earthenware vessels of Hajar and its leaves like elephants' ears'. See *Mishkāt*, p. 1266.
- 111 See above, p. 356, note 56.
- 112 The reference is (a) to the well-known episode in the Joseph story in which the Egyptian ladies, unable to take their eyes off the handsome young man-servant, cut their hands with the knives provided for peeling their oranges and, of course, (b) to the miracle of the splitting of the moon, on which see above, p. 356, note 63.
- 113 Koran, XX. 106: 'And He [God] shall leave them [the mountains] a level plain . . .'
- 114 Koran, LV. 76: 'Their [the houris'] spouses on soft green cushions and on beautiful carpets shall recline. . . .'
- 115 Koran, XXIV. 35: 'God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth . . . It is light upon light . . .'
- 116 See above, p. 356, note 57.
- 117 I.e. the nine heavens.
- 118 *sirū saira aq'afikum*. This appears to be a *ḥadīth* (tradition of the Prophet) but I have been unable to trace it. The words are reminiscent of Mohammed's answer to 'Uthmān when he had asked him to make him the *imām* of his people: 'Thou art their *imām*, but do according to what the weakest of them is capable of [*wa-'qtadi bi-aq'afihim*], and employ a muezzin who does not accept payment for his employment.' See *Mishkāt*, pp. 135-6.
- 119 The reference is to the distance of two bows (*qāba qausain*) 'or a little nearer' to which God approached Mohammed on the night of his Ascent but also to a story (which Ritter thinks must be 'Aṭṭār's own invention) in the *Muṣibat-nāma*: 'When two Arab lords

wished to form a pact of friendship with each other they laid two bows together as a sign that the two had become one. When this alliance, called '*aqd al-musāqāt*', had been concluded, the words and deeds of the two were joined together. The property of the one was the property of the other, the condition of the one was the condition of the other. Duality, I-ness and thou-ness, came to an end. That night God concluded such an alliance with the Prophet. They laid the two bows of the *qāba qausain* on each other. Since that alliance was concluded the words and deeds of the Prophet are nought but the words and deeds of God.' See *MdS*, p. 576.

- 120 The One, i.e. the One God.
- 121 An alternative form of Muḥammad (Mohammed).
- 122 The Arabic name for the letter *m*.
- 123 I.e. Mohammed disappeared and only God was left. See *Mathnawī* vii. 26; *MdS*, p. 577.
- 124 I.e. Gabriel.
- 125 Koran, lxi. 17: 'His eye turned not aside, nor did it wander . . .'
- 126 Koran, xxxiii. 40: 'Mohammed is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of God, and the seal of the prophets . . .'
- 127 Koran, xvii. 41: This is a part of the wisdom which thy Lord hath revealed to thee . . .'
- 128 See above, note 125.
- 129 Koran, ii. 29: 'And He taught Adam the names of all things, and then set them before the angels, and said, "Tell me the names of these, if ye are endowed with wisdom."'
- 130 *musammā* '(thing) named'. On the antithesis between *ism* 'name' and *musammā* see *Mathnawī*, vii. 202.
- 131 *umm al-kitāb* 'the mother of the book', i.e. the divine archetype of the Koran and all prophetic writings. On the term see Paret, 1971, pp. 264–6.
- 132 *ummi*. Note the word-play with *umm al-kitāb*. On the various interpretations of the word see *Mathnawī*, vii. 51; Paret, 1971, pp. 21–2.
- 133 See *Mishkāt*, p. 1268.
- 134 The Angel of Death.
- 135 The Archangel who will sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection.
- 136 Koran, lxxxii. 11.
- 137 *Idris* (Enoch) was said to have been the first astronomer. See *Mathnawī*, viii. 371.
- 138 A prophet mentioned in the Koran (vii. 71–7), who was sent to the tribe of Thamūd and, asked by them to produce a miracle, caused a camel to materialize out of a rock.
- 139 According to Muslim belief Abraham was the builder of the Ka'ba. See Koran, ii. 119.
- 140 Khidr or Khaḍir, the servant of God encountered by Moses at the 'confluence of the two seas' (Koran, xviii. 59–64). This enigmatic figure has been identified with the cook in the Alexander Romance who accidentally discovered the water of life and so achieved immortality. In Muslim popular belief he is a prophet who appears, dressed in green robes, to Muslims in distress.
- 141 I.e. John the Baptist.
- 142 Apparently Mohammed had a slave of this name.
- 143 Koran, cxii. 1.
- 144 A reference to the action of Umm Jamīl, the wife of Mohammed's uncle Abū Lahab ('Abd al-'Uzzā), who had opposed the Prophet's mission. They are both attacked in Sūra cxi, on which see Paret, 1971, pp. 528–30.
- 145 An abridged form of the opening verse of Sūra cxiii and also of Sūra cxiv. On these two apotropaic sūras see Paret, 1971, p. 531.

- 146 The first Caliph (632–634).
- 147 Ṣiddiq 'the Truthful One', the title given to Abū Bakr by Mohammed.
- 148 See above, p. 355, note 30.
- 149 On the day of his conversion he devoted the greater part of his fortune to the purchase of slaves who had been persecuted for their attachment to the new faith of Islam.
- 150 I.e. Mohammed. See above p. 354, note 13.
- 151 He was the first convert to Islam outside the Prophet's family.
- 152 *MdS*, p. 236.
- 153 Upon his inauguration as Caliph, Abū Bakr began his speech with the words: 'Ye people! now, verily, I have become the Chief, although I am not the best amongst you. If I do well, support me; if I err, then set me right . . .' See Muir, p. 486.
- 154 Abū Bakr like 'Umar is buried alongside the Prophet at Medina in what was originally the apartment allotted to 'A'isha.
- 155 During the night in the cave Abū Bakr is said to have been bitten by snakes but not to have stirred for fear of waking the Prophet. See *Mishkāt*, pp. 1323–4.
- 156 According to a tradition transmitted by Tirmidhī he said of them: 'These are hearing and sight.' See *Mishkāt*, p. 1331.
- 157 The second Caliph (634–44).
- 158 A title ('the Distinguisher') bestowed on 'Umar by the Prophet.
- 159 A reference to the words of the Prophet: 'God speaks by the tongue of 'Umar.' See Hujviri, p. 254.
- 160 A name given to the Koran. On its meaning see Paret, 1971, p. 19. On the other hand the Muslim lexicographers are unanimous in the interpretation of it as 'that which distinguishes between good and evil', hence 'Aṭṭār's word-play with *Furqān* and *Fārūq*.
- 161 A reference to the conquest of Persia under 'Umar and the conversion of the Persians to Islam.
- 162 A reference to 'Umar's expulsion of the Byzantines from Syria and Egypt. The word for 'lock' is *quṭṭ-i Rūmī*, literally 'Byzantine lock'.
- 163 The maund (*man*) was a unit of weight equivalent in Persia at this period to 833 grammes. See Hinz, 1955, p. 18.
- 164 In his chapter (pp. 45–57) on the wearing of the *muraqqa'a* or patched frock, 'the badge of aspirants to Sufism', Hujviri says (p. 45) that 'Umar wore a *muraqqa'a* with thirty patches on it.
- 165 The two angels who question the dead in their graves. See *Mishkāt*, pp. 34 and 35–6.
- 166 The public censor of religion and morals. 'Umar used to perform this office in person, perambulating the streets of Medina whip in hand and meting out summary justice to all and sundry.
- 167 See above, note 156.
- 168 I have been unable to trace this tradition.
- 169 The third Caliph (644–655).
- 170 On 'Uthmān's sense of modesty see *Mishkāt*, p. 1333.
- 171 'Uthmān is known as the 'Possessor of Two Lights' because of his having married two of the Prophet's daughters, Ruqaiya and Umm Kulthūm.
- 172 It was 'Uthmān who produced the definitive recension of the Koran.
- 173 A reference to his violent death at the hand of insurgents.
- 174 I cannot trace this story.
- 175 Koran, vii. 4: 'So he [Moses] threw down his rod, and lo! it distinctly became a serpent.' See also below, p. 369, note 22.
- 176 See above, note 160.
- 177 According to Hujviri, p. 73, he said: 'Whoever of you does not take up arms is a free man.'

- 178 I.e. his own version of the text.
- 179 The fourth and last of the Orthodox Caliphs (656-661), the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet.
- 180 I.e. the Lion, one of the titles of 'Ali.
- 181 The story is told in Baiḍāwī's commentary on Sūra LXXVI. 8-10: 'It is related that Hasan and Hosein, Mohammed's grandchildren, on a certain time being both sick, the prophet among others, visited them, and they wished Ali to make some vow to God for the recovery of his sons: whereupon Ali, and Fâtema, and Fidda, their maid-servant, vowed a fast of three days in case they did well; as it happened they did. This vow was performed with so great strictness, that the first day, having no provisions in the house, Ali was obliged to borrow three measures of barley of one Simeon, a Jew, of Khaibar, one measure of which Fâtema ground the same day, and baked five cakes of the meal, and they were set before them to break their fast with after sunset: but a poor man coming to them, they gave all their bread to him, and passed the night without tasting anything except water. The next day Fâtema made another measure into bread, for the same purpose; but an orphan begging some food, they chose to let him have it, and passed that night as the first; and the third day they likewise gave their whole provision to a famished captive. Upon this occasion Gabriel descended with the chapter before us, and told Mohammed that God congratulated him on the virtues of his family.' See Sale, pp. 432-3, note x.
- 182 Untraced.
- 183 Untraced.
- 184 A reference to the words of the Prophet: 'I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate.' See *Mathnawī*, vii. 216.
- 185 A reference to the Golden Calf (Koran, xx. 90), and also to the exclamation of 'Ali upon beholding the riches of the public treasury at Basra: 'O yellow metal, O white metal, seduce others, not me.' See Mas'ûdī, iv. 336.
- 186 Abu'l-Ḥasan, i.e. Father of Ḥasan.
- 187 Abū Turāb, 'the Dusty One'. Originally, perhaps, a by-name given to 'Ali by his enemies, but according to a tradition recorded by Bukhārī, iv. 205 and 232-3, it was given him by the Prophet and was the name he liked best to be called by. One day he had quarreled with Fāṭima and leaving his home had stretched himself out and fallen asleep beside the wall of the mosque. The Prophet found him there, his back covered with dust. He dusted him down and said: 'Come, sit up, Abū Turāb.'
- 188 I.e. the Taurāt (the Books of Moses), Zabūr (the Psalms of David), Injīl (the New Testament) and the Koran.
- 189 Untraced.
- 190 The old name of Medina.
- 191 See above, p. 355, note 35.
- 192 See *MdS*, p. 220.
- 193 On the following apostrophe of the poet's own soul which is at the same time the Universal soul, see *MdS*, p. 626.
- 194 Koran, xvii. 85.
- 195 See above, note 140.
- 196 *al-Duḥā* 'the period half way between sunrise and noon' is the title of Sūra xciii.
- 197 *al-Qadr*, the title ('Destiny') of Sūra xcvi, which begins: 'Verily, We have caused it [the Koran] to descend on the Night of Destiny.' On the Night of Power (Destiny) on which the Koran was revealed to Mohammed see *Mathnawī*, vii. 340; Paret, 1957, p. 43.
- 198 The Hebrew 'Amrām. In the Koran he is also the father of the Virgin Mary. See Paret, 1971, pp. 64-5.
- 199 See above, p. 355, note 34.

- 200 See above, p. 354, note 3.
 201 On the Creative Word *Kun* ('Be') see *Mathnawī*, vii. 1140, 1934.
 202 *Kalim Allāh* 'the Converser with God'.
 203 See above, p. 358, note 107.

Discourse I

- 1 *MdS*, pp. 353–6. The story is probably of Jewish origin. In the *Arabian Nights* version the husband is a Jewish judge. See Burton, v. 256.
- 2 I.e. her eyes were almond-shaped like the Arabic letter *ṣād* and her eyebrows arched like the letter *nūn*.
- 3 The word-plays are untranslatable. The letters *nūn* and *ṣād* (i.e. her eyebrows and eyes) combine to form the word *naṣṣ* '(Koranic) text'. *Nūn* is one of the mysterious letters that are prefixed to certain sūras on which see Nöldeke, pp. 47–8; Paret, 1971, pp. 12–13. The meaning then is that the beauty of her eyes and eyebrows was as indisputable as a decisive text, not doubtful like the letter *nūn* at the beginning of Sūra 68.
- 4 I.e. lips.
- 5 I.e. the water of immortality. See above, p. 359, note 140.
- 6 So Ritter, *MdS*, p. 353, note 1. *Marjūma* means 'the Stoned (Woman)'. The text has *Marhūma* 'the Pitied (Woman)'.
 7 An example of the figure *tanāsub*, on which see above, p. 358, note 94. The narcissi are her eyes, the Judas-tree her ruddy cheeks and the tulips tears of blood.

Discourse II

- 1 On the creation of the heavens out of smoke see above, p. 356, note 53. According to a tradition which Mas'ūdī, i. 46–7, attributes to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 687), the Prophet's cousin, the first thing that God created was water, and when he wished to continue the work of creation he raised up smoke (not steam) from the water to form the heavens and dried up the water to form the earth. It is this dried-up water which 'Aṭṭār refers to as 'foam'.
- 2 *MdS*, 396–7.
- 3 In this and the following line the figure *ihām* (see above, p. 355, note 31). Here the ambiguous words are *qurbān* 'sacrifice' or 'quiver, bow-case' and *kīsh* 'religion, faith' or 'quiver'.
- 4 *khaff*, which also means letter.
- 5 Or 'it was unique [*ṭāq*] like his eyebrows'.
- 6 An example of *tanāsub* (see above, p. 358, note 94). Besides *shāh* 'king' and *piyāda* 'pawn' we have *asb* 'horse' or 'knight', *ṣīl* 'elephant' or 'bishop' and *rukh* 'cheek' or 'rook' in *rukh na-y-ārad* 'will not look'.
- 7 The star α Aurigae.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 294.
- 9 A descendant of 'Alī.
- 10 I.e. a crucifix.
- 11 I.e. the *zunnār*, which under Muslim rule Christians, Jews and Magians were required to wear around their waists.
- 12 I.e. the Caliph 'Alī.
- 13 Qārūn (the Biblical Korah) is the Muslims' Croesus.
- 14 *MdS*, p. 385.

- 15 *MdS*, p. 326.
- 16 I.e. 'Alī. The name means 'Lion'.
- 17 See above, p. 354, note 1.
- 18 Anūshīrvān or Nūshīrvān, the Sassanian monarch (531–539), proverbial for his justice.
- 19 *MdS*, p. 315. The story is told by Nizām al-Mulk in his *Siyāsat-nāma*. See Darke, p. 131.
- 20 According to Ritter, index to *MdS*, s.v. Cundī, this is perhaps Bābā Kamāl Jandī, a pupil of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1221), the teacher of Shams-i Tabriz.
- 21 *MdS*, pp. 306–7.
- 22 Muḥammad Ma'shūq Ṭūsī, a wise fool, contemporary of Abū Sa'id b. Abu'l-Khair, on whom see below, note 25.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 325.
- 24 This is, of course, Khidr. See above, p. 359, note 140.
- 25 Abū Sa'id b. Abu'l-Khair, a famous Sūfī (d. 1049), on whom see Hujvīrī, pp. 164–6; also Meier (1977).
- 26 *MdS*, pp. 325–6.
- 27 *MdS*, p. 307.
- 28 Abu'l-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan of Sarakhs, the *pir* or spiritual teacher of Abū Sa'id b. Abu'l-Khair. See Hujvīrī, pp. 165, 188 and 227–8.
- 29 *MdS*, p. 304.

Discourse III

- 1 On Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Adham 'born in Balkh of pure Arab descent . . . described in Sufi legend as a prince who renounced his kingdom . . . and wandered westwards to live a life of complete asceticism . . . until his death in c. 165 (782)', see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 62–79; Hujvīrī, pp. 103–5. His biography 'contains traits reminiscent of the legend of the Buddha-elect'. See Lang, 1957, p. 31.
- 2 *MdS*, p. 360.
- 3 Identified by Ritter (index to *MdS*, s.v.) with Abu'l-Qāsim 'Alī Jurjānī (d. 469/1076–1077), the teacher of Hujvīrī. See Hujvīrī, pp. xviii–xix and 169–170.
- 4 *MdS*, p. 326.
- 5 *MdS*, pp. 163 and 361.
- 6 I.e. to become Christians. See above p. 362, note 11.
- 7 *MdS*, pp. 163 and 361.
- 8 The liver is for the Muslim the seat of the passions, as it was for the Greeks.
- 9 *istighnā*. On God's *istighnā*, His lack of need for the service and worship of His servants, see *MdS*, pp. 550–4.
- 10 The House of Sorrows is the name of the dwelling which Jacob built for himself upon hearing the false news of Joseph's death.
- 11 I follow Rouhani in ending the father's apostrophe of God here and not three lines before as in Ritter's text.
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 361–3.
- 13 See above, p. 362, note 11.
- 14 *MdS*, p. 362.
- 15 Literally 'a soul (dear one) in dearness'.
- 16 There is a word-play in the different meanings of 'azīz: 'dear, precious', 'mighty' and 'ruler (of Egypt)'.
- 17 Out of respect, as is still done in Turkey (Ritter).
- 18 See above, note 18.

- 19 *MdS*, p. 511. On 'Aṭṭār's expression *āshnā'i* 'Urbekannntschaft mit Gott' see the whole section, pp. 509–11.
- 20 *MdS*, pp. 255 and 511.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 571.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 417. Majnūn ('madman', his real name was Qais al-Āmirī), an Umayyad poet famous for his love of Lailā, which provides the subject of several romantic epics in Persian and Turkish.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 613.
- 24 *MdS*, p. 613.

Discourse IV

- 1 Rouhani has the form Sartapek (Sartāpak). According to Ritter (*MdS*, index, s.v. *sarpātak*) the word is Indian or Indo-Persian and means 'cupper' or 'head-splitter'.
- 2 *MdS*, pp. 621–2. A highly interesting version of the international tale of the Magician and his Apprentice, on which see Bolte-Polivka, II. 60–9, and Cosquin's monograph in the *Revue des Traditions Populaires*. The metamorphoses undergone by the apprentice, which are such a prominent feature of the tale, are here entirely omitted and the magician attends the sick princess (or prince) as a real physician or rather surgeon; it is not a disguise that he adopts in pursuit of the fleeing apprentice.
- 3 In other versions the apprentice simply feigns stupidity (Cosquin, pp. 408, 426 and 428); in some (Bolte-Polivka, p. 60) he pretends to be illiterate and so incapable of reading the magician's books.
- 4 *shāh-zād*, which Rouhani translates quite legitimately (and perhaps correctly) as 'prince'. Ritter, on the other hand, translates it as 'princess' in the light of the parallel versions, and this interpretation is apparently confirmed by the circumstance of the boy's throwing a 'woman's garment' (*chādūr*) around him in order to be admitted to the bedside.
- 5 This episode, which appears to be foreign to the original tale, occurs in the Urdu version of the *Tale of the Four Dervishes*, in which the magician figures as a *gusā-in* or Hindu religious mendicant and his patient as a 'young lunatic'. Forbes, the translator, comments: 'This exceedingly absurd story is of Rabbinical origin. I have a strong impression on my mind of having read something very like it long ago in the works of Philo Judaeus, the contemporary of Josephus.' See *Bāgh o Bahār*, pp. 144–5 and note 1.
- 6 According to the version in the *Tale of the Four Dervishes* he hanged himself. See *Bāgh o Bahār*, p. 145.
- 7 See above, note 1.
- 8 In the book, according to the *Bāgh o Bahār*, pp. 145–6, 'was written the "Most awful of Names" [see below, p. 367, note 1], and the mode of invoking the genii and the fairies, and the holding of intercourse with spirits, and how to subdue them, also the mode of charming the sun'.
- 9 On the carnal soul (*nafs*) see *MdS*, pp. 203 ff.
- 10 Koran, XII. 54: 'Yet I [Joseph] hold not myself clear, for the soul is prone to evil [*ammāra*], save theirs on whom my Lord hath mercy . . .'
- 11 Koran, LXXXIX. 7–8: 'Oh, thou soul which art at rest [*muṭma'inna*], return to thy Lord, pleased, and pleasing him'.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 502.
- 13 See above, p. 358, note 106.
- 14 A play on the two meanings of *tāq*. See above, p. 362, note 5 to Discourse II.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 611.

- 16 *MdS*, pp. 424–5.
- 17 I.e. the locks and ringlets of his black hair hung over his white forehead. The Arabic letters *jīm* and *mīm* are poetical metaphors for curls of hair.
- 18 The letters *jīm* and *mīm* spell the name of Jam or Jamshīd, on whom see above p. 355, note 33.
- 19 *hājib* 'chamberlain' is a poetical metaphor for the eyebrow.
- 20 The nodes of the sugar-cane being regarded as so many belts.
- 21 I.e. teeth.
- 22 I.e. lips.
- 23 See above, p. 362, note 13.
- 24 The word-play cannot be fully translated: *kursī* 'stool' is the name of the eighth heaven, which is the stool of the empyrean '*arsh*, which also means 'throne'.
- 25 *MdS*, p. 606.
- 26 Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (997–1030), famous for his campaigns in India: *MdS*, p. 187; Spiess, pp. 37–8.

Discourse V

- 1 On Abū Bakr Dulaf b. Jahdar al-Shiblī, the Baghdad mystic (d. 846), see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 277–86.
- 2 *MdS*, p. 286.
- 3 *MdS*, p. 287.
- 4 The Muslim Antichrist coming as one of the signs of the Last Hour see *Mishkāt*, pp. 1143–564.
- 5 The Muslim Messiah. According to a saying of the Prophet: 'The Maḥdī will be of my stock and will have a broad forehead and a prominent nose. He will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with oppression and tyranny, and will rule for seven years.' See *Mishkāt*, p. 1140.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 47.
- 7 *MdS*, p. 206. The identity of Abu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī has not been established.
- 8 A figure of the National Epic, the ruler of Tūrān and the hereditary enemy of Iran.
- 9 Bīzhan was a young Iranian hero captured by Afrāsiyāb and imprisoned in a well.
- 10 The well was covered with a 'boulder belonging to Akvān the Div which the Lord of the world wrested from the depth of the ocean and cast into the China forest'. See *Epic of the Kings*, p. 164.
- 11 Rustam, the Persian Hercules and the chief hero of the National Epic, 'stretched out his hand and without a moment's delay lifted the boulder, which he threw into the forest in the land of China, thus causing the whole surface of the earth to shake'. See *Epic of the Kings*, p. 170.
- 12 I.e. Tūrān, Afrāsiyāb and his people being identified with the Turks.
- 13 Kai Khusrau, the most celebrated of the mythical dynasty of the Kayānids. It is he who finally defeats and kills the hereditary enemy Afrāsiyāb.
- 14 Rustam's horse.
- 15 I.e. Abū Yazīd Taifūr b. 'Isā b. Surushān al-Bistamī (d. 874 or 877), the founder of the ecstatic school of Šūfism, on whom see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 100–23; Hujvirī, pp. 106–8 and 184–8.
- 16 The Umayyad Caliph (60–4) responsible for the death of Ḥusain, the son of 'Alī.
- 17 I.e. a Šūfī. See above, p. 360, note 164.
- 18 I.e. a Christian. See above, p. 362, note 11.
- 19 *MdS*, pp. 291–2.

- 20 *MdS*, p. 292. The story is based on a tradition transmitted by Dārimī: "Umar b. al Khaṭṭāb brought God's messenger a copy of the Torah, saying, "Messenger of God, this is a copy of the Torah". When he received no reply he began to read to the obvious displeasure of God's messenger, so Abū Bakr said, "Confound you, do you not see how God's messenger is looking?" So 'Umar looked at God's messenger's face and said, "I seek refuge in God from the anger of God and His messenger. We are satisfied with God as Lord, with Islām as religion, and with Muhammad as Prophet". Then God's messenger said, "By Him in whose hand Muhammad's soul is, were Moses to appear to you and you were to follow him and abandon me, you would err from the right way. Were he alive and came in touch with my prophetic mission he would follow me." See *Al-fishkāt*, p. 49.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 293; Spiess, pp. 25–6. Spiess thinks that this story may have a foundation in fact. Baihaqī records that in June or July 1031 a cloudburst caused great damage in Ghazna, in particular destroying a bridge over the river. A new bridge was then built by a 'pious and charitable merchant called Amūya or Hamūya'. See Ghani-Faiyāḍ, p. 260; Arends, pp. 250–1.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 282. On Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 764), the great grandson of Ḥusain and the ninth Imam of the Twelve Shi'a, see *LHP*, I, 393.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 216.
- 24 A word-play on *Ka'ba* and *ka'batain* 'dice'.
- 25 *MdS*, p. 290.
- 26 I.e. he belonged to the school of Ṣūfis known as *Malāmatis* 'who, in order to devote themselves to God alone, kept their asceticism secret, made a show of impiety, and behaved in such a way that they were regarded as "black sheep" by all good Moslems'. See *Mathnawī*, VII, 180; also Hujviri, pp. 62–9.
- 27 *MdS*, p. 291.
- 28 I.e. during the recitation of the *Fātiḥa*, the first sūra of the Koran, which begins with the words *al-ḥamdu li 'llāh* 'Praise be to God'.

Discourse VI

- 1 The Angel of Death.
- 2 *MdS*, p. 37. The story was told before 'Aṭṭār by Ghazzālī in his *Nasīḥat al-Mulūk* (Bagley, p. 42) and after him by Rūmī in his *Mathnavī* (*Mathnawī*, II, 54; Arberry, 1961a, p. 48).
- 3 *MdS*, p. 589.
- 4 *MdS*, p. 589.
- 5 *MdS*, pp. 133–4.
- 6 I.e. the world.
- 7 I.e. the Heavens.
- 8 *MdS*, pp. 249–50.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 374.
- 10 On the Ṣūfī term *'ain al-yaqīn* 'intuition of certainty', see Hujviri, pp. 381–2; *Mathnawī*, VII, 269.
- 11 Fakhr al-Dīn As'ad of Gurgān, the author of the romantic epic *Vis and Rāmīn*, compiled at some time between 1040 and 1054. See *Iranica*, pp. 151–99, and the introduction to Morrison's translation.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 365.
- 13 The ancient Hyrcania, a province lying on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian.
- 14 Minorsky, *Iranica*, p. 196 and note 1, suggests that 'Aṭṭār may have had in mind one of the later Ziyārids.

- 15 An instance of *thām* (see above, p. 355, note 31), *chin* meaning both 'China' and 'curl('s)'.
 16 See above, p. 354, note 1.
 17 I.e. his eyes.
 18 See above, p. 365, note 20.
 19 See above, p. 366, note 11.
 20 On Abu'l-Mughith al-Ḥusain b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, 'the most controversial figure in the history of Islamic mysticism', executed for blasphemy at Baghdad in 913, see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 264–71; Hujviri, pp. 150–3.
 21 *MdS*, p. 528.
 22 *MdS*, p. 422.
 23 *MdS*, pp. 391–2.
 24 I.e. they curled. There is also in this line a word-play on *dāl*, the Arabic letter, and *dāl(l)* 'indicator, guide'.
 25 An instance of *thām* (see above, p. 355, note 31): *paivasta* 'continual(ly), always' and *paivastagi* 'continuity' mean also 'joined' and 'junction' respectively and so refer obliquely to the meeting of his eyebrows over the nose, which is regarded as a special beauty.
 26 The name of an orthographical sign, a minute circle placed over a consonant to indicate that it is not followed by a vowel.
 27 I.e. his teeth, of the same number as the letters of the Arabic alphabet.
 28 *thuqba dar gūsh* 'having a hole in the ear'.
 29 *ḥalqa dar gūsh* 'having a ring in the ear'.
 30 *MdS*, p. 514; *Muslim Saints*, pp. 229–30. On Abu'l-Ḥusain Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nūrī (d. 908) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 221–30.
 31 *majāzi* 'figurative, metaphorical', i.e. earthly, physical love as distinguished by the Ṣūfīs from heavenly (*ḥaqīqī* 'real') love. See *MdS*, p. 436.
 32 *MdS*, p. 534. The story seems to be based in part on an account by 'Ain al-Qudāt of Indian ascetics' setting themselves on fire as an act of self-immolation and in part on the story preserved in 'Aṭṭār's own *Tadhkirat al-Auliya* in which the Sūfī saint Ibn Khafīf (882–982) relates how, when in Byzantine territory, he had seen a monk burnt alive and his ashes smeared on the eyes of the blind. See *MdS*, pp. 533–4; *Muslim Saints*, p. 260. On Abu'l-Qāsim Hamadānī see above, p. 365, note 7.
 33 This is the normal meaning of *tarsā*. The term can, however, be applied to the Zoroastrians also, and that is how Ritter (*MdS*, p. 534, and Rouhani, transl., p. 156), have understood it here. In view of the apparent origins of the story (see the previous note) I have preferred the normal meaning.
 34 The monk in Ibn Khafīf's story is described as being 'wasted as a shadow'. See *Muslim Saints*, p. 260.

Discourse VII

- 1 *MdS*, p. 198; *Mathnawī*, II, 229–30 and 245–7; Arberry, 1961, pp. 92–3. The Greatest Name of God is 'generally said to be Allah, wherein *Huwa* is contained . . . Knowledge of the Name confers miraculous powers in those who possess it, viz. prophets and heads of the hierarchy of saints and can be communicated. . . .' See *Mathnawī*, VII, 239.
 2 *MdS*, pp. 73–4. On the death of Nimrod see Sidersky, pp. 41–2. The legend comes from Rabbinical sources, where, however, it relates, not to Nimrod, but to Titus, the destroyer of the Temple.
 3 I.e. Khalīl Allah 'Friend of God', a title given to Abraham in the Koran.
 4 *MdS*, p. 136. See above, p. 365, note 9.

- 5 Here the term *tarsā* (on which see above, p. 367, note 33) must mean 'Zoroastrian'.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 74. I.e. Abū Yazid al-Bistāmī, on whom see above, p. 365, note 15.
- 7 Here the girdle (*zunnār*—on the term see above, p. 362, note 11) is obviously the *kusti* or thread-girdle still worn by the Zoroastrians as a symbol of their religion.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 552.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 62.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 401. Yūsuf of Hamadan does not appear to have been identified. On the present story see above, p. 357, note 78.
- 11 *MdS*, p. 402. This story is not separately numbered in Rouhani's text.
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 70–1.
- 13 *MdS*, p. 71.
- 14 *MdS*, p. 71. Abū Bakr Sufāla (or perhaps Saffāla) has not been identified.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 120; Spiess, pp. 11–12.
- 16 *MdS*, p. 37.
- 17 On the mythical image of the soul in the form of a bird see Frazer, II. 33–6; Eliade, pp. 479–81.
- 18 See above, p. 354, note 8.
- 19 On Ḥasan of Basra (642–728), 'one of the greatest saints of early Islam', see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 19–25.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 205. On Rābi'a bint Ismā'il al-'Adāwiya (d. 752 or 801) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 39–51, and for this story, pp. 44–5.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 216.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 406.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 287.
- 24 'To strew nuts on a dome' is a proverbial expression for useless labour.
- 25 This line is absent from Ritter's text.
- 26 *MdS*, p. 611. On Abū Sa'īd see above p. 363, note 25.
- 27 Mihna or Maihana (now Meana) lies between Dushak and Sarakhs in Turkmenistan.
- 28 *MdS*, pp. 367–8; Spiess, pp. 67–8: 'Maḥmūd and Ayāz sind der literarische idealtyp für das vorbildliche liebesverhältnis zwischen herrn und sklaven geworden . . .' On the historical Ayaz (d. 1057) see *MdS*, pp. 297–300; Spiess, pp. 46–50. This name (the Turkish *ayas* or *ayaz* 'bright, cloudless') was one that was given to slaves 'as a simile for the brightness of their faces'. See Clauson, p. 276.
- 29 See above, p. 354, note 23.

Discourse VIII

- 1 *MdS*, pp. 536–7; *Muslim Saints*, pp. 248–9.
- 2 Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusain al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. c. 932), 'one of the outstanding creative thinkers of Islamic mysticism'. See *Muslim Saints*, pp. 243–9.
- 3 See above, p. 354, note 8.
- 4 *MdS*, pp. 71 and 544.
- 5 *MdS*, p. 547.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 550.
- 7 *MdS*, pp. 547–8; Spiess, p. 54.
- 8 I.e. the head, breast, belly, hands and feet.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 548.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 544.
- 11 See above, p. 354, note 1.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 368; Spiess, pp. 64–5.

- 13 *MdS*, p. 406.
 14 *MdS*, p. 382.
 15 *MdS*, pp. 383 and 550.
 16 *MdS*, p. 549.
 17 *MdS*, p. 396.
 18 *MdS*, p. 391; *Muslim Saints*, p. 281.
 19 *MdS*, p. 548.
 20 *MdS*, pp. 544 and 550.
 21 'When the angels in Heaven boasted of their superiority to the wicked children of Adam, God made two of their number, Hárút and Márút, subject to lust and passion and sent them down to the earth, where they fell in love with a beautiful woman and tried to seduce her. She would not, however, yield to their desire till they taught her the word of power that enabled them to ascend to Heaven. Having learnt it she ascended, and God transformed her into Zuhrah (the planet Venus). Hárút and Márút were imprisoned in a pit at Babylon, choosing to expiate their sin in this world rather than suffering everlasting torment hereafter.' See *Mathnawí*, vii. 52.
 22 An allusion to Moses' rod, which turned into a serpent and swallowed up the serpents produced by Pharaoh's magicians out of their rods. See Koran xx. 60–73. On Pharaoh's magicians see Sidersky, pp. 86–7.

Discourse IX

- 1 On the *jām-i Jam* 'the cup of Jamshid' see also below, pp. 176–7.
 2 Jamshid was sawn in half by the orders of the usurper Dahhāk. See *Epic of the Kings*, p. 15.
 3 *MdS*, p. 125; Spiess, pp. 23–4.
 4 There follows an extra line in Rouhani's text: 'Thou art left like a wretched infidel, being able to help neither others nor thyself.'
 5 I.e. with a crossed knot like the ligature *lām-alif* (regarded as the twenty-ninth letter of the Arabic alphabet).
 6 See above, p. 362, note 11.
 7 *MdS*, p. 48. Buhlūl was a 'wise fool' who lived in the time of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809).
 8 I.e. the bridge across the infernal fire said to be finer than a hair and sharper than a sword.
 9 *MdS*, p. 37.
 10 *MdS*, p. 41.
 11 The older Arabic script found mainly in inscriptions.
 12 *MdS*, p. 216. On Abū 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Azdī of Balkh (d. 810) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 133–7.
 13 *MdS*, p. 56.
 14 *MdS*, p. 136.
 15 Sāmīri (on the name see Paret, 1971, p. 335) was the man who made the golden calf for the Children of Israel (Koran, xx, 87–96). He animated it by throwing upon it a handful of dust from the track of the 'messenger of God', i.e. Gabriel. On the Midrashic source of the story see Paret, 1971, p. 336.
 16 '... and we sent our spirit [i.e. Gabriel] to her, and he took before her the form of a perfect man' (Koran xix. 17). 'And her who kept her maidenhood and into whom we breathed of our spirit...' (Koran xxi. 91).

- 17 *Rūh Allāh*, i.e. Jesus himself.
- 18 *MdS*, p. 243. On Abū Bakr b. Mūsā al-Wāṣiti, an early disciple of Junaid, see Hujviri pp. 154–5.
- 19 *MdS*, p. 627.
- 20 *MdS*, pp. 563 and 566.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 563.
- 22 The use of baked bricks is forbidden in the inside of a Muslim tomb.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 564. Abū 'l-Faḍl b. Muḥammad al-Fārmadhī, the teacher of Muḥammad Ghazzālī, died in 477/1084–1085.
- 24 See above, p. 359, note 32.
- 25 *MdS*, pp. 265–6.
- 26 According to 'Ā'isha (the tradition is transmitted by Bukhārī), she had never 'seen the Prophet laughing so heartily that she could see his uvula; he used only to smile'. See *Mishkat*, p. 993.
- 27 *MdS*, pp. 383 and 562.

Discourse X

- 1 See above, p. 354, note 10.
- 2 On Jesus' ascent into heaven see below, p. 378, note 27; *MdS*, p. 31.
- 3 An allusion to Hārūt and Mārūt, on whom see above, p. 369, note 21.
- 4 The last of the Great Seljuqs (1117–1157).
- 5 *MdS*, p. 122. 'Abbāsa-yi Ṭūsi (Abū Muḥammad 'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. Abū Maṣṣūr, d. 549/1153–54) was said to have been 'Aṭṭar's teacher. See Ritter, index to *MdS*, s.v.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 184.
- 7 *MdS*, pp. 525–6.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 507.
- 9 Presumably a reference to the slaughter of the male children of the Israelites by order of the Pharaoh (Koran, II. 46; Exodus, I. 15–20).
- 10 *MdS*, p. 566. The story is told by Rūmī in his *Fihī mā fihī* of an unnamed king and his concubines. See Arberry 1961b, p. 199.
- 11 I.e. Mohammed.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 250, *Muslim Saints*, pp. 47–8. On Rābi'a see above, p. 368, note 20.
- 13 *MdS*, pp. 179–80. On Buhlūl see above p. 369, note 7.
- 14 There can of course have been no question of a king of Basra at the time of Hārūn al-Rashid.
- 15 *MdS*, pp. 321 and 598. Abū 'l-Laith Būshanjī, a Ṣūfī of fifth eleventh century. Būshanj (Pūshang) lay on the site of the present-day Ghurian in north-western Afghanistan.
- 16 *MdS*, p. 286.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 305.
- 18 *MdS*, p. 189. On the great Muslim thinker, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), 'the theologian who did more than anyone else to bring to an end the reign of Philosophy in Islam, and to set up in its stead a devotional mysticism which is at once the highest expression and the clearest limitation of the orthodox Muhammadan doctrine', see *LHP*, II. 293–6; Watt, 1953, *passim* and Bagley, pp. xxxii–xxxviii. By the Heretics *par excellence* are meant the Ismā'īlīs of Alamut, on whom see Hodgson, 1955; Lewis, 1967 and *CHI*, III. 422–82.
- 19 In Rouhani's text there follows an extra line: 'There was a distraught Kūshahdī who in that age was called Kūshahdī.' In the next line also the mystic is referred to as

Kūshahdī (Būshahdī in Ritter's text). I have adopted Ritter's suggestion that this is a corruption of Būshanja. On Laith-i Būshanja see above p. 370, note 15.

20 *MdS*, p. 552.

21 *MdS*, p. 256.

Discourse XI

- 1 *MdS*, p. 290. On *tauḥīd* (unification) see Hujvīrī, pp. 278–85: 'Real unification (*tauḥīd*) consists in asserting the unity of a thing and in having a perfect knowledge of its unity. Inasmuch as God is one, without any sharer in His essence and attributes, without any substitute, without any partner in His actions, and inasmuch as Unitarians (*muwaḥḥidān*) have acknowledged that He is much their knowledge of unity is called unification' (p. 278).
- 2 *MdS*, p. 103; *Muslim Saints*, p. 38. Ḥasan is Ḥasan of Basra, on whom see above, p. 368, note 19. Ḥabīb (not Ḥusain as in Ritter's text and *MdS*) is Ḥasan's pupil Ḥabīb al-Ajamī (Ḥabīb b. Muḥammad al-Ajamī al-Basrī), a Persian settled at Basra. See *Muslim Saints*, pp. 32–8.
- 3 *Jaiḥūn* is usually the Oxus (and is so translated by Ritter, *MdS*, p. 103), but the name can be applied to any large river, and here the Tigris is meant, as appears from the version of the story in the *Tadhkirat al-Auliyā* (*Muslim Saints*, p. 38).
- 4 *MdS*, pp. 622–3.
- 5 *MdS*, p. 405; Spiess, p. 84.
- 6 *MdS*, pp. 417–18: 'Die klassische geschichte für die durch die gegenwart des geliebten bewirkte Anästhesie ist die von dem gezeisselten liebhaber' (p. 417).
- 7 *MdS*, p. 216. On 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797–8), a pious traditionist and preacher of the *jihād*, see index to *MdS*, s.v.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 266, where a reference is given to the tradition on which this story is based.
- 9 The ejaculation *Allāh akbar* 'God is most great', which occurs frequently in the funeral service.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 267.
- 11 *MdS*, p. 112.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 173.
- 13 I.e. Eternity Part, referring to Koran, vii. 171: 'And when Thy Lord brought forth their descendants from the reins of the sons of Adam and took them to witness against themselves, "Am I not [Alastu]", said He, "Your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we witness it". This we did, lest ye should say on the day of Resurrection, "Truly, of this were we heedless, because uninformed".'
- 14 The *khirqā* is the patched garment of the Ṣūfī.
- 15 On the *zunnār* see above, p. 362, note 11.
- 16 Abū Aiyūb, the companion who placed his house at Mohammed's disposal upon his arrival in Medina.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 283.
- 18 *MdS*, pp. 259–60; *Muslim Saints*, pp. 23–5.
- 19 *sham'*—a pun on his name.

Discourse XII

- 1 *MdS*, pp. 584 and 585. On Jamahīd's 'world-displaying cup' see Christensen, 1934, pp. 128–37.

- 2 On the end of Kai Khusrau, who renounces the throne in favour of Luhrāsp, who belonged to a parallel branch of the Kayānids, and disappears into the snow of the Elburz mountains, see Christensen, 1931, p. 117.
- 3 *MdS*, pp. 580–581.
- 4 *MdS*, p. 592, where there is also a translation of the Arabic original of this story.
- 5 *MdS*, p. 142.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 513.
- 7 *MdS*, p. 167.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 334. Malik-Shāh (1072–1092) was the third of the Great Seljuqs.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 579.
- 10 On toothpicks as presents see *MdS*, p. 198.
- 11 *MdS*, p. 415; Spiess, p. 87. This story appears in Rouhani's text and translation as No. 11.
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 588–9.
- 13 *MdS*, p. 581. In Rouhani's text and translation No. 10.
- 14 *MdS*, p. 597.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 579. In Rouhani's text and translation No. 8.
- 16 A play on the word *tābūt*, the term used for the Ark in which Moses was exposed and also the ordinary word for 'coffin'.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 584.
- 18 Koran xxiv. 35: '... It [God's light] is light upon light ...'
- 19 *MdS*, p. 341.

Discourse XIII

- 1 *MdS*, p. 341.
- 2 I.e. the Two-horned. This is the epithet by which Alexander is referred to in the Koran (xviii. 82–96). Various explanations have been offered as to its meaning: it is perhaps of ancient Egyptian origin. See Horovitz, 1926, pp. 111–13; Boyle, 1974, p. 226, note 21.
- 3 On the wall built by the legendary Alexander to enclose the peoples of Gog and Magog see Anderson, *passim*; Boyle, 1974, pp. 218–19.
- 4 On Og of Bashan see Sidersky, pp. 100–2. The collar seems to be a reference to the mountain which, according to a Talmudic text, he tore up and carried upon his head intending to drop it upon the Israelites. But God caused some ants to climb on top of the mountain and to dig through it so that it fell round his shoulders with his head protruding through the middle. He tried to free himself from it but his projecting teeth prevented him from doing so. Moses, who was ten cubits tall, took a staff of the same length, made a leap also of ten cubits and, even so, reaching only to Og's ankle, knocked him over and killed him.
- 5 Siyāvush, the son of Kai Kā'ūs and the father of Kai Khusrau, who, accused of attempting the virtue of his stepmother Sūdaba, establishes his innocence by undergoing the ordeal of fire. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 83–92; Darke, pp. 185–7.
- 6 *MdS*, pp. 99–100.
- 7 *MdS*, p. 100. Tā'ūs b. Kaisān al-Yamanī (d. 725), of the Tābi'ūn, i.e. those who had conversed with the Companions of the Prophet, though not themselves his contemporaries.
- 8 *MdS*, pp. 72.
- 9 On the 'pain of religion' see *MdS*, pp. 248ff.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 38.
- 11 *MdS*, p. 182.

- 12 *MdS*, p. 182.
- 13 *MdS*, pp. 181–2. On Buzurgmihr (Buzurjmihr is the Arabic form of the name), the vizier of Anūshīrvān, see Bagley, pp. lxvii–lxx.
- 14 I.e. why art thou miserable (*kūr u kabūd*, literally ‘blind and blue’)? The poets regard the narcissus as being blind.
- 15 *āshnā’i*. See above p. 364, note 19.
- 16 *MdS*, pp. 264 and 510. This is the story of the Bird and the Prophet from the Baarlām and Josaphat legend. See Jacobs, p. cxvii.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 583.
- 18 *MdS*, p. 217.
- 19 The wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd.
- 20 A kind of sweetmeat.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 219.
- 22 On Bārbad (Bārbud), a minstrel at the court of Khusrau Parvīz (591–628), see *LHP*, 1. 15–18; Rypka, pp. 56–7.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 242.
- 24 *MdS*, p. 94. Sha’bī is the famous traditionist of Kūfa (d. c. 728). This is the story of the Man and the Bird from the Baarlām and Josaphat legend. See Jacobs, pp. lxxx–lxxxi; Lang, 96–7. The story is told also by Rūmī. See Arberry, 1963, p. 56.
- 25 *ṣa’va*, which Ritter translates as ‘sparrow’ and Rouhani (pp. 261–2) as ‘serin’. In the Barlaam and Josaphat legend the bird is a nightingale.
- 26 The *mithqāl* was a unit of weight, used mainly for precious metals, based on the Byzantine *solidus*. In medieval Persia it was equivalent to 4.3 grammes. See Hinz, 1955, p. 5.
- 27 *MdS*, p. 92. This story occurs in the *Sindbād-nāma* (Ateş, pp. 336–7).
- 28 A mythical circle of mountains believed to encompass the earth.
- 29 *MdS*, p. 319.
- 30 I.e. the direction in which all Muslims turn when praying, towards Mecca.
- 31 *MdS*, p. 320. Faḡl b. Rabi’ (d. 808) belonged to the famous family of the Barmecides, on whom see Bagley, p. 181, s.v. Barmakids.
- 32 *MdS*, p. 99.
- 33 *MdS*, p. 99.
- 34 See above, p. 368, note 8 to Discourse VIII.

Discourse XIV

- 1 *MdS*, p. 111.
- 2 I.e. Hermes Trismegistos, the name bestowed by the Greeks on the Egyptian god Thoth as the supposed author of the Hermetic writings.
- 3 On stories of such drums in central Asia under the Sāmūnids and in Egypt under the Fāṭimids see *MdS*, p. 111.
- 4 The motif of the salve which gives clairvoyance (Thompson D1323.5). See also below p. 374, note 112.
- 5 On Alexander’s adventures in the Land of Darkness see Ausfeld, pp. 83–4; Boyle, 1974, p. 224. The Land of Darkness lay, of course, not in India but in the far north.
- 6 According to the popular Persian version of the Alexander Romance (see Monchi-Zadeh, p. 174) Alexander passed through the Desert of the Ants *en route* to the Land of Darkness. There is evidently some connection with the well-known legend of the giant gold-digging ants. According to the twelfth-century Muslim geographer Marvazī, there is a country ‘at the farthest limit of India . . . where gold grows like grass. Merchants can

- penetrate into it only at night for fear of the ants, which are the size of a dog and can overtake the best horses if they are wounded or are moving slowly.' See Minorsky, 1942, p. 90, and if Herodotus, III, 102-5.
- 7 The historical Alexander died of course of a fever, probably malaria, In the Alexander Romance his death is due to poisoning. See Ausfeld, pp. 109-20; Wolohojian, pp. 149-57.
- 8 See above, p. 372, note 2 to Discourse XIII.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 73.
- 10 The story of Nimrod and his mother as survivors of a shipwreck seems to be found elsewhere only in the *Mathnawi* of Jalāl al-Din Rūmī, who perhaps may have taken it direct from 'Aṭṭār. See *Mathnawī*, VI, 523. According to the normal version of the legend (*Mathnawī*, VIII, 430) he was thrown in the water by the wife of the shepherd to whom his mother had secretly entrusted him.
- 11 According to the normal version of the legend he was cast ashore into a forest, where he was suckled by a leopardess or tigress, in Arabic *nimr*, whence his name. See *Mathnawī*, VI, 523-4 and 525, VIII, 403.
- 12 See above, p. 373, note 4.
- 13 On the 'four humours', i.e. choler, phlegm, blood and melancholy, see Gibb, I, 301, note 1: '... Health was regarded as the result of the proper relationship of those humours to one another; and when this relationship was disturbed, disease ensued ... This system, which is as old as Hippocrates, was maintained, even in the West, until the beginning of the eighteenth century ...'
- 14 Koran x. 25: 'Verily, this present life is like the water which we send down from Heaven, and the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat, is mingled with it, till the earth hath received its golden raiment, and is decked out: and they who dwell on it deem that they have power over it! *but*, Our behest cometh to it by night or by day, and we make it as if it had been mown, as if it had not seemed only yesterday ...'
- 15 The name of Rustam's horse.
- 16 See above, p. 371, note 14.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 288.
- 18 *yaqīn*, on which see above, p. 366, note 10.
- 19 This line is absent from Ritter's text.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 150.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 288.
- 22 A niche in the walls of mosques marking the direction of Mecca.
- 23 I.e. straight.
- 24 I.e. bent.
- 25 *MdS*, pp. 374-5, where Ritter reproduces the tradition out of which this story has been elaborated.
- 26 I.e. 'Umar. See above, p. 360, note 158.
- 27 *MdS*, pp. 239-40.
- 28 *MdS*, pp. 378-9.
- 29 *MdS*, p. 280.
- 30 *MdS*, p. 374.
- 31 *MdS*, p. 367. This story is taken from the *Sindbād-nāma* (Ateş, pp. 326-30). For a translation of the Greek version see Clouston, pp. 278-9.
- 32 *MdS*, p. 366; Spiess, p. 66.
- 33 Muhammad b. 'Isā b. Nahik, the chief of police of the Caliph Amin (d. 819).
- 34 *MdS*, p. 99.
- 35 *MdS*, pp. 113-14; Spiess, p. 12.
- 36 *MdS*, pp. 260-1

- 37 *MdS*, p. 331.
 38 On the name of the poetess see Meier, 1963, pp. 43–57.
 39 *MdS*, pp. 331–2; Meier, 1963, pp. 53–6.
 40 In Persian *māh*: a word-play on her name. See Meier, 1963, p. 56.
 41 Half-way between Quchan and Meshed. These meadows were afterwards a favourite resort of the Mongol Il-Khans.
 42 Again a pun on her name. Rouhani has a different text for the second half of the line.
 43 See above, notes 40 and 42.
 44 Spiess, p. 31.
 45 *MdS*, p. 322.
 46 *MdS*, p. 534.
 47 *MdS*, p. 243.
 48 The Ṣūfī is 'the man of the moment' *ibn al-waqt*, *waqt* 'time' being used in the sense of 'the moment of immediate experience of being under Divine control'. See *Mathnawī*, VII. 21.
 49 *MdS*, p. 59.
 50 *MdS*, p. 125.
 51 *MdS*, p. 134.
 52 *MdS*, pp. 379–80; Spiess, pp. 76–9.

Discourse XV

- 1 Solomon's knowledge of the speech of the birds is referred to in the Koran (xxvii. 16). On the Jewish origin of the belief that he understood the language of animals see Sidersky, p. 122.
 2 This and the preceding line are absent from Ritter's text.
 3 The reference is to the battle between Rustam and his son Suhrāb, a famous episode in the *Shāh-nāma*, familiar to English readers from Matthew Arnold's poem. This story in the opinion of Potter (p. 7) 'seems . . . to exhibit most clearly all the characteristics of the Father and Son Combat theme', of which other examples are the *Hildebrandslied* and the Irish tale of Cuchulainn and Conlaach. See also Gennep, pp. 235–52. For translations see *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 64–80, where, however, the end of the story is omitted, and Mohl, II. 54–153. When Suhrāb lies dying, Rustam sends to Kai Kā'ūs to ask for 'a portion of that panacea which he holds in his store for healing stricken bodies'. The request being refused he sets out to appeal to the king in person but is overtaken by a messenger with the news that Suhrāb is already dead.
 4 The banner of Kāva, the blacksmith who led the revolt against the tyrant Dāhhāk, was fashioned out of his leather apron. See *Epic of the Kings*, p. 20; Christensen, 1936, pp. 496–8.
 5 Koran, II. 4.
 6 *MdS*, p. 116; Spiess, p. 14.
 7 Actually scarlet runner beans.
 8 There is a word-play on *zāl* 'old woman' and *Zāl*, the name of Rustam's father.
 9 *MdS*, p. 109. The *humā* or *humāi*, a bird of good omen whose shadow was believed to prognosticate a crown for the head on which it fell is in actual fact the lammergeyer.
 10 *MdS*, p. 110.
 11 Yazdigird III, the last of the Sassanians, killed (in 651) according to legend by a miller in whose mill he had taken refuge in his flight before the Arabs. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 418–19.
 12 *MdS*, p. 110; Spiess, p. 16.

- 13 *MdS*, pp. 109–10; Spiess, p. 15.
- 14 I.e. the planet Mars.
- 15 The Sassanian king Bahrām V (420–38): he met his end while hunting wild asses (*gūr*, whence his surname).
- 16 Bahrām Chūbin rose in revolt against Hormizd IV (579–590) and for a short time (590–591) usurped the Persian throne. Attacked by Hormizd's son and successor Khusrau Parviz (591–628) in alliance with the Byzantines he fled to the Turks at Balkh, where he was put to death, probably at Khusrau's instigation. His adventurous life caught the imagination of the Persians and formed the subject of a popular romance in the Pahlavi language which has not survived but the contents of which can be reconstructed from the accounts in the Muslim historians and the *Shāh-nāma* (*Epic of the Kings*, pp. 340–64). See Christensen, 1939, pp. 438–40. There is a word-play here on his surname Chūbīn, which means 'Wooden'.
- 17 Gūr-Khān (*Gūr-Khan* 'Universal Khan') was the title of the rulers of the Qara-Khitai, an offshoot of the Chinese dynasty of the Liao, who dominated Central Asia in the century preceding the rise of the Mongol power. 'Attār probably has in mind the first Gūr-Khān, Yeh-lü Ta-shih (1124–1143), who in 1141 inflicted a disastrous defeat on Sultan Sanjar in the steppes to the east of Samarqand. There is a pun on *gūr-khāna* 'mausoleum'.
- 18 *MdS*, p. 109.
- 19 An allusion to the ruins of the Sassanian palace known as the 'Arch of the Chosroes' on the eastern banks of the Tigris. See le Strange, p. 34; also Christensen, 1936, pp. 385–8.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 35.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 199; *Muslim Saints*, pp. 63–6.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 117; Spiess, p. 22.
- 23 With the curt '*alaik*' ('peace be) on you'.
- 24 *MdS*, p. 117. Rukn al-Dīn b. Akkāf (d. 1155) was a pupil of Qushairī, the Ṣūfī shāikh and writer (d. 1074).
- 25 *MdS*, p. 48. Ritter remarks that this story reminds him of another one about a thirsty Bedouin who finds a purse filled with jewels. He was presumably thinking of the story of the *Gulistān* (III/15) of the hungry Bedouin, lost in the desert, who finds a bag of pearls and mistakes them at first for parched wheat. See Cranmer-Byng, p. 40.
- 26 A word-play on *dirmana* 'wormwood' and *diram* 'dirhem'.
- 27 *MdS*, p. 124; Spiess, p. 17.
- 28 Maḥmūd was said in fact to have been an ugly man. Cf. the anecdote on this subject told by Nizām al-Mulk (Darke, p. 50).
- 29 I.e. straight.
- 30 I.e. bent.

Discourse XVI

- 1 I.e. the planet.
- 2 *MdS*, pp. 108–9.
- 3 *MdS*, pp. 199–200.
- 4 This part of the famous story (for the literature see *MdS*, p. 200) is remarkably reminiscent of the Four Visions of the Buddha.
- 5 From *sabt*, the Arabic for 'Saturday'.
- 6 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās, the Prophet's cousin and a famous authority on the Koran and the Traditions.

- 7 *MdS*, pp. 117–18.
- 8 'Abbās, the ancestor of the 'Abbāsids, was an uncle of the Prophet.
- 9 Koran, xxxiii. 103: 'And when the trumpet shall be sounded, the ties of kindred between them shall cease on that day; neither shall they ask each other's help.'
- 10 Koran, ii. 256: '... Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His own permission? ...'
- 11 Siyāvush, the son of Kai Kā'us and the father of Kai Khusrau, put to death by his father-in-law Afrāsiyāb on the false charge of having plotted against him. See Christensen, 1931, pp. 111–12; *Epic of the Kings*, p. 98.
- 12 *MdS*, p. 36.
- 13 *MdS*, p. 110.
- 14 See above, p. 368, note 17.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 41.

Discourse XVII

- 1 *MdS*, p. 90.
- 2 *MdS*, p. 44.
- 3 *MdS*, pp. 81–2.
- 4 Powerful evidence against the claim that the free-thinking Omar Khayyam was in fact a Šūfī. See Boyle, 1969, pp. 44–5.
- 5 Koran, xlvii. 38: 'Surely this present life is only a play and pastime ...'
- 6 *MdS*, p. 43.
- 7 Koran, xiii. 39: 'What he pleaseth will God abrogate or confirm: for with Him is the source of revelation.'
- 8 *MdS*, p. 227: 'Die ärmlichkeit, in der die familie des profeten lebt, tritt bei der hochzeit seiner tochter Fāṭima mit 'Alī besonders krass zutage. 'Aṭṭār malt diese traurige hochzeit mit grosser sentimentalität aus, sodass sie mehr den eindruck einer leichenfeier als eines hochzeitfestes macht.'
- 9 The son of Mohammed's freedman and adopted son Zaid.
- 10 'Fair', 'Beautiful', the epithet of Fāṭima.
- 11 'Alī. See above, p. 361, note 180.
- 12 A veil or mantle covering the whole person.
- 13 I.e. the constellation Aquarius. See above, p. 358, note 98.
- 14 This line is not in Ritter's text. Rouhani, transl., p. 463, sees in it an allusion to the Zoroastrian doctrine according to which the universe will be a battlefield between Good and Evil for a whole eternity before the final triumph of Good.
- 15 More precisely 'young man' (*javān*), following Ritter's text: Rouhani has *jahān* 'the world'.
- 16 *MdS*, p. 40.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 72. On Abū Bakr Muḥammad n. 'Umar al-Warrāq (d. 903) see Hujvirī, pp. 142–3.
- 18 *MdS*, p. 140.
- 19 *MdS*, p. 138. On Abū 'Abdallāh Sufyān b. Sa'īd al-Thaurī (715–78) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 129–32.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 259.
- 21 Anas b. Mālik, a Companion of the Prophet and a famous traditionist (d. between 709 and 711).
- 22 I.e. Abū Bakr. See above, p. 360, note 147.

Discourse XVIII

- 1 *MdS*, p. 115. On this Jewish story, which occurs also in the *Arabian Nights* (Burton, v. 304), see Horovitz, 1901.
- 2 A reference to the 'Companions of the Cave', i.e. the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, whose story is the subject of Sūra xviii of the Koran. See Horovitz, 1926, pp. 98–9.
- 3 *MdS*, p. 114.
- 4 On Solomon as a weaver of baskets see *MdS*, pp. 52–3.
- 5 A word-play on *qurṣ*, which means both 'disk' and 'round loaf'. Cf. the following line.
- 6 Son of Hārūn al-Rashīd (813–833).
- 7 *MdS*, p. 337.
- 8 On the word-play in this and the following line see p. 354, note 24.
- 9 An allusion to the story of Joseph and his brethren (Genesis, xlv. 2).
- 10 *MdS*, p. 336.
- 11 A famous grammarian (d. 928).
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 263–4. On the origin of the story see *MdS*, p. 264.
- 13 *MdS*, p. 543.
- 14 *MdS*, p. 90.
- 15 Koran, xii. 89: 'He [Joseph] said: "Know ye what ye did to Joseph and his brother in your ignorance?"'
- 16 *MdS*, p. 246.
- 17 *MdS*, p. 288. Aḥmad Khālū-yī Sarakhsī (d. before 1089).
- 18 On Abū Zakariyā Yahyā b. Mu'ādh al-Rāzī (d. 871) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 179–82.
- 19 *MdS*, pp. 513–14; Hujvīrī, p. 187.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 394. On Abū Ali b. al-Qāsim al-Rūdabārī (d. 934) see Hujvīrī, p. 157.
- 21 The title of each of the first two of the 'six correct' books of traditions, that of Bukhārī (d. 870) and that of Muslim (d. 874).
- 22 There is a word-play on *khaff*, which means both 'letter' and 'down on the cheeks of a youth'.
- 23 A terrestrial paradise referred to in the Koran, Sūra lxxxix. 6–7: '... Iram adorned with pillars, whose like have not been reared in these lands!' (See Horovitz, 1926, pp. 89–90).
- 24 *MdS*, p. 120; Spiess, p. 12. The word translated 'trickster' is *davālak-bāz* literally 'strap-player'. The game of 'strap-playing' is described by Rouhani, transl., pp. 463–4. It is, he says a popular game which is still played, especially in the street. The 'strap-player' installs himself on the pavement, takes a strap and folds and refolds it until it is rolled right up. He then places it on the ground and invites passers-by to wager money with him. Whoever accepts the invitation takes a rod and rests one end of it on the pavement after having passed it through one of the folds. He holds the bar vertically in this position and the 'strap-player' pulls the strap from both ends. If the man with the rod has found the right fold, the strap, being held by the rod, cannot be released and he has won; but if he has put the rod through the wrong fold, the strap is released and he has lost. The 'strap-player' can, it is said, with a slight flick of the wrist ensure that the strap is released even when the man with the rod has chosen the right fold. On this account the word *davālak-bāz* 'strap-player' has become a synonym for 'cheat' or 'trickster'.
- 25 *MdS*, p. 202.
- 26 I.e. Abū Sa'īd. See above, p. 363, note 25.
- 27 For the story of the needle that was found in Jesus' pocket and debarred him from the highest heaven see *MdS*, p. 201.
- 28 *MdS*, p. 400.

Discourse XIX

- 1 *MdS*, p. 92.
- 2 *MdS*, pp. 92–3. Cf. the story in the *Mathnawī* (v. 2855 ff; *Mathnawī*, vi. 172–73) about ‘the cow that is alone in a great island’. Cf. also the beast (*dābba*) mentioned by Ibn ‘Abbās which God keeps ‘on one of His meadows’ and which could swallow heaven and earth in a single gulp. See *MdS*, pp. 613–14.
- 3 It is not clear what ‘Aṭā Allāh or Ibn ‘Aṭā is meant here.
- 4 See above, p. 373, note 28.
- 5 The word *halū*‘ occurs in the Koran (LXX. 19) but with the meaning of ‘hasty’ or ‘rapid’, not ‘voracious’.
- 6 *MdS*, pp. 100–01.
- 7 *MdS*, p. 219.
- 8 *MdS*, p. 49.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 52.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 52.
- 11 *MdS*, p. 47. This is the Manichaean story of the Drunken Prince and the Dead Body. The oldest version is an Old Turkish fragment amongst the Manichaean documents brought back from Turfan. It occurs also in the Arabic adaptation of the Barlaam and Josaphat story by Ibn Bābūya (d. 991), where ‘Aṭṭār perhaps found it. See Lang, 1957, pp. 28 and 34–5.
- 12 There are word-plays on *baḥr* ‘sea’ and ‘metre, rhythm’, and *rūd* ‘stream, river’ and ‘lute’.
- 13 Koran, LXIII. 3: ‘Who hath created seven Heavens one above another . . .’.
- 14 Āzar, Abraham’s father, the Terah of the Bible, was according to the Muslim authors, a carver of idols. On Abraham’s destruction of the idols see Sidersky, pp. 36–8.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 519, where the Arabic sources are quoted.
- 16 Presumably the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā* (‘Tales of the Prophets’) of Kisā’i, who flourished at the beginning of the eleventh century.
- 17 See above, note 14.
- 18 On Nimrod’s making war on Heaven from a coffer borne aloft by four vultures see Sidersky, pp. 41–2.
- 19 In Ritter’s text: ‘This carnal soul is to thee like the Guebre of Zoroaster; all of a sudden it will trample thee to death.’
- 20 *MdS*, p. 206.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 303.
- 22 Khaṭṭ (al-Khaṭṭ) was a coastal settlement on the Persian Gulf in what is now the Hasa region of Saudi Arabia. It was famous as a market for lance-shafts imported from India.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 203.

Discourse XX

- 1 *MdS*, p. 230.
- 2 The patched cloak of a dervish. See above, p. 371, note 14.
- 3 *MdS*, p. 379.
- 4 Here and in the next line *āshnā’i*, on which see above, p. 364, note 19.
- 5 The founder of the Sassanian dynasty (226–241).
- 6 *MdS*, pp. 510–11. For Firdausi’s version of the story see *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 270–5.
- 7 She was the daughter of Ardavān, the last of the Arsacids.
- 8 The name means ‘King’s Son’. This was Shāpūr I (241–272).

- 9 I.e. bestow largesse.
- 10 *MdS*, p. 511.
- 11 *MdS*, pp. 406–7; Spiess, pp. 55–6.
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 560–1.
- 13 *MdS*, pp. 530–1. Jirjis is St George, who besides being the patron saint of England is a Muslim prophet. See Baring-Gould, pp. 266–316.
- 14 *MdS*, pp. 563–4.
- 15 *MdS*, p. 526; *Muslim Saints*, pp. 66–7.
- 16 A place in the desert where pilgrims coming from Iraq don and doff their pilgrim garb (*ihrām*).
- 17 *MdS*, p. 250. Shu'aib is usually identified with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, but see Horovitz, 1926, pp. 119–20.
- 18 *MdS*, pp. 250–1.
- 19 Abū 'Ubaida b. al-Jarrāh, a Companion of the Prophet and one of 'the ten who were promised paradise'. See *Mishkāt*, p. 1345. His father's name (*al-Jarrāh*) means 'the surgeon'; hence the word-play in this line.
- 20 *MdS*, p. 417; Spiess, p. 57.
- 21 A reference to the arrow of tamarisk wood with which Rustam slew Isfandiyār, the son of Gushtāsp. The tree was shown to Rustam by the Simurgh (see above, p. 355, note 34) and the arrow was fashioned under her instructions. See *Epic of the Kings*, pp. 208 and 210–11 also Christensen, 1931, p. 123 and note 2.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 417.
- 23 In Ritter's text: 'He [i.e. Majnūn] cried out in pleasure: "If I have slaved for a lifetime, at last I see them both together".'

Discourse XXI

- 1 Apparently a reference to the *rukni* dinar, so called after the Būyid ruler Rukn al-Daula (934–976). It had a standard of only two thirds instead of a full *mithqāl* (see above, p. 373, note 26), i.e. only 2.9 grammes instead of 4.3 grammes. See Hinz, 1960, p. 188.
- 2 *MdS*, pp. 357–9. The 'emir of Balkh' appears in actual fact to have been a local ruler of Quzdar, the present-day Khuzdar in what is now Pakistan, his daughter being the poetess Rābi'a bint Ka'b al-Quzdarī mentioned by 'Aufī in his *Lubāb al-albāb*. See *MdS*, p. 259.
- 3 *gurg-āshti* 'insincere peace'.
- 4 'Ornament of the Arabs'. Her name was in fact Rābi'a. See above, note 1.
- 5 The figure *ihām* (see above, p. 355, note 31) makes an intelligible translation impossible. *bādām* 'almond' also means 'almond-shaped eye', and *naqd*, besides its ordinary meaning of 'cash', can also mean 'glance'.
- 6 Another instance of *ihām*. *āyat* means both 'miracle' and 'verse of the Koran', while the letter *mīm* is used to describe (a) a small mouth and (b) a passage of the Koran in which all the verses rhyme in *m*.
- 7 Koran, xii. 25; Genesis, xxxix. 12.
- 8 A reference to Koran, xii. 93–4. Joseph says to his brother: "'... Go ye with this my shirt and throw it on my father's face, and he shall recover his sight ...'" And when the caravan was departed, their father said: "I surely perceive the smell of Joseph: think ye that I dote?"
- 9 *āb-i Zīrih*. *Zīrih* has in actual fact nothing to do with *zīrih* 'mail'. It is the medieval name for the freshwater lake in Sistan now known as Hamun-i-Helmand and is derived from the Iranian word for sea (Avestan *zrayah*, Old Persian *drayah*, Modern Persian *daryā*). The

- name still survives in Gand-i-Zirreh, a depression some eighty miles to the south of the lake. On the Zirih or Zarih lake, which in medieval times was much more extensive than at present, see le Strange, pp. 338–9; *Hudūd*, pp. 73 and 185, and Brice, pp. 196–8. However the ‘Sea of Zirih’ over which Afrāsiyāb sailed back to his capital at Kang-dizh and across which he was afterwards followed by Kai-Khusrau (Mohl, iv. 119–20 and 138–40) is identical with the *zrāi i frākh-kart* of the later Zoroastrian tradition and means the (World-) Ocean. See Monchi-Zadeh, p. 235.
- 10 The reference is of course to the ripples in the previous line which are pictured as resembling chain mail.
- 11 His forehead being compared with the moon and his face with the Pleiades.
- 12 This and the following line are absent from Ritter’s text.
- 13 There is a play in this and the following lines on *rāst* ‘true’ and *mukhālīf* ‘opposing’, which are also the names of musical tones.
- 14 ‘*ushshāq* “lovers” is the name of a musical tone, and the second half of the line can therefore also be read as meaning ‘I belong to the scale of ‘*ushshāq*’.
- 15 This line is not in Ritter’s text.
- 16 I.e. the sprouting beard.
- 17 I.e. his mouth.
- 18 I.e. his teeth.
- 19 There is a word-play on *tabāshīr* ‘break of day’ and *ṭabāshīr* ‘bamboo pith’.
- 20 The line is virtually untranslatable. There are word-plays on *khaff* ‘writing’ and ‘down’, while *muḥaqqaq*, a special style of handwriting, and *naskh*, the normal Arabic hand, can also be understood as ‘confirmed’ and ‘abrogation’ respectively.
- 21 I.e. his chin.
- 22 I.e. tears of blood.
- 23 I.e. her flushed face.
- 24 I.e. pale.
- 25 On the *ghazal*, of which the nearest European equivalent is the sonnet, see *LHP*, II. 27–8; Rypka, pp. 263–71.
- 26 See above, p. 363, note 25.
- 27 On the Yaghma Turks, who in the tenth century were living astride of the Central and western Tien Shan and in the north-western corner of what is now Sinkiang, see *Hudūd*, pp. 95–6 and 277–81.
- 28 See above, p. 354, note 1.
- 29 See above, p. 378, note 7.
- 30 In this and the two preceding lines the figures known as *tanāsūb* (see above, p. 358 note 94) is applied to chessmen: *asb* ‘horse’ is also ‘knight’ and *fil* ‘elephant’, ‘bishop’.
- 31 Rustam’s horse.
- 32 See above, p. 358, note 94.
- 33 The seeds of wild rice are burnt as a charm against the evil eye.
- 34 On Abū ‘Abdallāh Ja‘far Rūdakī (d. 329/940–941), ‘the first really great poet of Muhammadan Persia’, see *LHP*, I. 455–8; Rypka, pp. 144–5.
- 35 As Ritter, *MdS*, p. 359, remarks, it was customary in Muslim countries down into recent times for brothers to put an erring sister to death.
- 36 In Ritter’s text: ‘... that hell asked me for a hundred flames’.

Discourse XXII

- 1 *MdS*, p. 220. On Plato in the folklore of the Konya region see Hasluck, II. 363–9.
- 2 See above, p. 374, note 13.

- 3 *MdS*, p. 247. Ritter in the index to *MdS*, s.v., tentatively identifies Abū 'Alī Ṭūsī with Abū 'Alī Daqqāq (d. between 1014 and 1022), the father-in-law of Qushairī.
- 4 *MdS*, p. 572.
- 5 *MdS*, pp. 134-5.
- 6 *MdS*, p. 135.
- 7 *MdS*, p. 502.
- 8 See above, p. 358, note 112.
- 9 *MdS*, p. 503.
- 10 *MdS*, pp. 432-3.
- 11 See above, p. 363, note 10.
- 12 *MdS*, pp. 604-5.
- 13 *MdS*, p. 412.
- 14 *MdS*, pp. 579-80, where Ritter quotes Qushairī's version, according to which the stranger is sent to Bāyazīd by Dhu'l-Nūn. See also Hujvīrī, p. 250.
- 15 Koran, vii. 121-2, xxvi. 47-48.
- 16 See above, p. 368, note 20.
- 17 On the famous Ṣūfī Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Khurqānī (d. 1029) see *Mathnawī*, viii. 171-2 and 353. The spelling Khurqānī (not Kharrāqānī) is guaranteed by the metre both here and in the following story. Khurqān was a town in the province of Qūmis four leagues from Bisām on the road to Astarābād. See le Strange, pp. 23, note 1, and 366.
- 18 I.e. Abū Mahfūz Ma'rūf b. Firūz al-Karkhī (d. 815), on whom see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 161-5.
- 19 On Abū 'Alī al-Fuḍail b. Iyāḍ al-Tālaqānī (d. 803), who began his career as a highwayman, see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 52-61.
- 20 I.e. Ibrāhīm b. Adham, on whom see above, p. 363, note 1.
- 21 *MdS*, p. 260. On Ḥallāj's 'I am God' (*ana'l-Haqq*) and Bāyazīd's 'Exalted am I' (*subhānī*) see *MdS*, pp. 589-90, and 629-32.
- 22 *MdS*, p. 601.
- 23 *MdS*, p. 561.
- 24 This passage is based upon a tradition (*ḥadīth qudsī*) quoted by Ritter (*MdS*, p. 561) and Rouhani (transl., pp. 466-7). The tradition (foretelling the words that God will address to mankind on the Day of Judgment) is remarkably reminiscent of Matthew xxv. 31-45.
- 25 *MdS*, p. 260.
- 26 According to Mustaufī (Stephenson, p. 20) the food of the musk deer 'is the spikenard and sweet-smelling herbs'.
- 27 In fact, of course, a small gland in the male animal.

Epilogue

- 1 I.e. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, the author; but we are expected to read simultaneously *shī 'r-i farīd* 'incomparable poetry'.
- 2 See above, p. 355, note 29.
- 3 *baḥr*, which also means metre, so that we can equally well read: 'Since the metre of my poetry is perfect . . .'
- 4 I.e. the zodiacal light (in Persian *subḥ-i kādhīb*), which is seen in the east before sunrise.
- 5 *ilāhī* is both an adjective meaning 'divine' and a noun meaning 'God'. It is clear from the present passage that in the title of 'Aṭṭār's poem it bears the latter meaning. It has been so understood by Ritter, *MdS*, p. 2) 'Gottesbuch') and Rypka, pp. 238 ('The Book

- of God') and 239 ('The book of the Divinity'). On the other hand Rouhani calls his translation 'Le Livre divin'.
- 6 Or 'like a savage (*vaḥshi*)'. In this and the following line there are word-plays on this word and *ḥamza* ('wheat broth') as common and proper nouns. Ḥamza was the uncle of the Prophet slain at the Battle of Uḥud (January 625) by the negro slave Waḥshī. See Muir, pp. 245 and 252.
 - 7 To avert the evil eye. See above, p. 381, note 33.
 - 8 *MdS*, p. 221. The story is also found in the *Qābūs-nāma* (Levy, p. 260), where it is attributed to Shibli.
 - 9 I.e. the *Shāh-nāma*, for which Sultan Maḥmūd is said to have paid Firdausī twenty thousand dirhams. See *Chahār Maqāla*, p. 56.
 - 10 Firdausī, bitterly disappointed with his fee, is said to have gone to the bath, and, on coming out, to have bought a draught of *fuqā'* (a kind of beer) and shared the money between the bath-attendant and the seller of *fuqā'*. See *Chahār Maqāla*, p. 56.
 - 11 I.e. 'I am favoured by a most fortunate conjunction of the stars'.
 - 12 *MdS*, p. 155. On the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā), a fraternity of encyclopaedists and philosophers in tenth-century Baghdad whose aims were 'the reconciliation of Science and Religion, the harmonising of the Law of Islam with Greek Philosophy, and the synthesis of all knowledge in encyclopaedic form' see *LHP*, I. 292-3 and 379-81.
 - 13 *MdS*, pp. 154-5.
 - 14 *MdS*, p. 343. Uwais al-Qarani was an ascetic who fell in the Battle of Ṣiffīn (657), fighting for 'Alī against Mu'āwiya. For his legend see Hujviri, pp. 83-4.
 - 15 *MdS*, p. 155.
 - 16 *MdS*, pp. 111-12.
 - 17 *MdS*, p. 148.
 - 18 *MdS*, p. 148.
 - 19 *MdS*, p. 155.
 - 20 *MdS*, p. 135.
 - 21 *MdS*, p. 62.
 - 22 According to the Arab historians, Zacharias (the father of John the Baptist) was sawn in half inside a tree in which he was miraculously concealed. The story is derived from the Talmud, where it is told of the Prophet Isaiah. See Christensen, 1934, pp. 73-4.
 - 23 *MdS*, p. 257.
 - 24 This and the following story are absent from Ritter's text.
 - 25 Abū Sahl Ṣu'lūkī, a colleague of Abū 'Alī Daqqāq, seems to have been a native of Nishapur. See Hujviri, p. 272.
 - 26 *MdS*, p. 275. A tradition transmitted by Bukhārī. See *Mishkāt*, p. 404. The story is reproduced by Sa'di in his *Būstān* (n/8), where however it is told of a man. See Wickens, p. 79.
 - 27 *MdS*, p. 261.
 - 28 A mountain twelve miles from Mecca, where the pilgrims stay on the ninth day of the pilgrimage.
 - 29 *MdS*, p. 70.
 - 30 *MdS*, p. 278.
 - 31 *MdS*, p. 272.
 - 32 *MdS*, p. 254.
 - 33 *MdS*, p. 148.
 - 34 *MdS*, p. 249.
 - 35 See above, p. 354, notes 5 and 6.
 - 36 This and the following three stories are absent from Ritter's text.
 - 37 On Shaikh Abu'l-Khair Aqta'al-Tinātī (d. c. 340/951-2) see *Mathnawī*, VIII. 45.

- 38 I.e. Muḥammad b. Taifūr al-Sajāwandī (d. c. 560/1164–5), the author of a commentary on the Koran.
- 39 A Companion of the Prophet (d. 652 or 653).
- 40 *MdS*, p. 363.
- 41 On the *humā* see above, p. 375, note 9.
- 42 *MdS*, pp. 270 and 295, *Muslim Saints*, p. 81. On Abū Naṣr Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfī (c. 767–841) see *Muslim Saints*, pp. 80–6.
- 43 Even today, says Ritter (*MdS*, p. 295), pious Muslims will not allow paper with writing on it to be trodden on or dirtied because it might have the name of God on it.
- 44 'Aṭṭār, as Browne remarks (*LHP*, II, 507), though 'generally translated "the Druggist". means exactly one who deals in 'iṣr, or attar of roses, and other perfumes . . . '.

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